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Mohammed Sani Isa Abulmumin  
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MYSTICAL DIMENSION IN  
SALAH ABD AL-SABUR'S  
DREAMS OF THE ANCIENT MIGHT

BY  
MOHAMMED SANI ISA ABULMUNIR

1990





878

MYSTICAL DIMENSION  
IN  
ṢALĀḤ ʿABD AL-ṢABŪR'S  
DREAMS OF THE ANCIENT KNIGHT

٥٤٤  
Thesis  
1990/878

A Thesis submitted to  
The Center For Arabic Studies  
The American University In Cairo  
In Partial Fulfillment of The Requirement For The Degree of  
Masters of Arts.

BY  
MOHAMMED SANI ISA ABULMUMIN

SPRING 1990.



This Thesis For The Masters of Arts Degree  
By  
Mohammed Sani Isa Abdulmumin  
Has Been Approved.

[REDACTED]

Chairman, Thesis Committee.

Acknowledgment

[REDACTED]

Reader, Thesis Committee.

[REDACTED]

Reader, Thesis Committee.

[REDACTED]

Chairman, Department of Arabic  
Studies.



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## Preface

In works of criticism on modern Arabic poetry, there is a paucity of objective studies that aim at tracing the influence of the Sufi tradition on modern poets - although this tradition is one of the richest veins of Arabic literary culture, especially at the popular level. Perhaps caught up over much in the relentless search for originality, critics have thought less of attempting to give a true picture of how this phenomenon is infused into verse of an individual poet.

However, there is one modern poet who is the exception to this rule - to the extent that all of the writers who have written about him have acknowledged the permeating presence of this phenomenon in his poetry. But that is as far as they have been prepared to go. They all, have mentioned the influence of mysticism in 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's creative works, relating it to one collection or the other. But they failed to explore in depth the way in which mysticism influenced the individual components of the poet's vision, images, or language.



This study therefore, intends to fill this gap, by examining in details the influence of Mysticism on the poetry of Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, with particular reference to the collection Dreams of The Ancient Knight (1964).

There are several aspects of this tradition that ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr has incorporated into his poetry, to explain his own outlook on the world. Inherently, they involve a reaching out towards concerns that transcend time and place; of human existence, reality, justice, and the true nature of the God-man relationship. In doing so, he places man at the very center of the universe and makes him the orbital point from which the searching for and discovery of transcendental reality begins.

An in-depth study of Islamic mysticism is obviously outside the scope of such a study. however, a brief survey of the subject is essayed in an introductory chapter, and only in so far as it is necessary to establish how ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr understood it. This section also includes a review of relevant literature on the subject.

The second chapter is concerned with the tracing of mystical trend in the two collections of poetry preceding one under study, People of My Country, and I Say Unto You, to indicate what is believed to be the genesis of this influence upon his work and which the collection Dreams of The Ancient Knight developed.



Chapter Three then concentrated on Dreams of The Ancient Knight, and discussed in detail the way this influence manifested itself in his poetic imagery, style, and language.

A fourth chapter briefly traced the continuation and/or change in this tendency in collections subsequent to Dreams of The Ancient Knight; and the conclusion attempted a final assessment.



# TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

## Arabic scripts

## Equivalents

### a. Consonants:

ا ب ج د ه و ز ح ط ق ك ل م ن هـ و ي

b  
t  
lh  
j  
h  
kh  
d  
dh  
r  
z  
s  
sh  
s  
q  
t  
f  
z  
c  
gh  
f  
q  
k  
l  
m  
n  
h  
w  
y

### b. Vowels:

- short

ا  
ب  
ج

a  
u  
i

- long

آ  
أ  
إ  
أ  
أ

ā  
ū  
ī  
aw  
ay

The definite article is transliterated as al- and 'l-, even when the word begins with a Sun letter.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Perhaps there is no single most recurrent element in the whole creative output of Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, that has so evidently moulded his vision of the world like Mysticism. It is Mysticism in fact, which gave ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's poetry the universal outlook that enabled it transcend what was personal and temporary in the poet's experience, to what is permanent and eternal; secrets of human existence and the understanding of this existence, the eternal quest for love and justice, the unceasing journey into the infinite, and immortality. These besides his continuous endeavor to free the mind from its long bondage as "prisoner of reason", in a bitter struggle to transform the world, change life, and reshape human understanding.

The mysticism that this study addresses, however, is what Haddara says to be a "point of view" that places the human being in his rightful position within nature and existence, and within various levels of relationships ; man, the physical world he lives in, etc. As an integrated "introspection of an experience of the human soul",<sup>1</sup> mysticism becomes a non-dimensional human phenomenon with no bounds in either a particular religion, or in the material world, in time or in place.

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1. M. Haddāra, "al-Nazʿa 'l-Ṣūfiyya fī 'l-shiʿri 'l-Ḥadīth", *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Adabi 'l-Arabī 'l-Ḥadīth*, (Beirut, 1981), p. 211.



But as this study is an exploration of this phenomena in the poetry of a fore-grounded Arab poet, it became natural from time to time, that mysticism assume a particular Islamic colouring, in the instance of which Islamic mysticism, better known as Sufism, will become the frame of reference, being an aspect of Arab tradition that aims at relating man to God, and both to other creation of the world. And despite the common quest the two share, for a "perfectly factual apprehension of the Absolute"<sup>2</sup>, Islamic Mysticism provides its own way to God by means of the indirect approach through rituals<sup>3</sup> for reaching to this Absolute. Also Islamic Mysticism in this sense, and in distinction to Mysticism, believes in the necessity of undergoing "an exercise of the soul", in preparation for this apprehension through four major stages: Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Union.

Man's quest for union with the Godhead, therefore, dominates Islamic Sufi thought, against which the legacy was set for the institutionalization of such practices as Ascetism, Knowledge (meaning "the coming of the inner light or gnosis"), Ecstasy, Truth (in the sense of the coming of revelation, as to the true nature of God and of the human existence); for a smooth "pass away" and Union, where the soul ceases to exist independently from God.

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2. K. Semaan, "Islamic Mysticism in Modern Arabic Poetry and Drama", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 10, (1979), p. 517.

3. See Ibid.



Seen against this background also, Mysticism relies heavily on intuition and "the heart" rather than logic and intellect; For within this heart dwelt "the essence of the divine" in existence.

In the poetry of ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, especially poems of the collection under study, *Aḥlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qadīm* (*Dreams of The Ancient Knight*), Mysticism came to acquire a special meaning as it combined aside of these two connotations, a third aspect that is to become equally as important. There is usually a side of Divine revelation, that furnishes for the directly indecipherable realities, or those phenomena of religions that fall under what a writer called "the area of shade", against others that are traditionally within "the area of light". Reference here is to what is usually referred to in traditional religious thoughts and sciences as the esoteric and exoteric aspects of revelation (e.g. Sharīʿa/Sufism, ʿAql/Naql, etc). ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr added up this aspect to what he envisioned in the institution of prophethood, of heavy responsibilities and commitment to a course, which he sees similar with the poet's, that came to represent Mysticism and the "Mystical experience", in his eyes.

Thus in the poetry of Sabur, Sufism (as the esoteric aspect of Islam, here) complements Prophecy, as does Mysticism (as a specialized exercise of the soul) to religion. Poetry being the common denominator that unites them all.



It was Mysticism in these three senses that ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr so often compares with poetic experience in that both aim at "entrenching the essence of Truth", in the human being<sup>4</sup>

\*\*\*

Viewed only through its general and Islamic sense, however, Mysticism will show the same striking similarity with the poetic experience. Which was, in fact, what led both Zayed, and Nasr ʿA.; the former while making a comparison between the two from a poet's point of view, and the latter in what he explored of the "rich world of Sufi Symbolism" as contained in their poetry, led them both to conclude that it is ultimately pointless to set the two experiences apart, as both are concerned with expressing an experience of the human quest for secrets of existence, and of "harmonizing elements of this existence, into one united absolute"<sup>5</sup>, or in ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's own words:

"distilling the world by taking it back to the time when the various elements that form its physical nature were in a complete harmony."<sup>6</sup>

Besides this, Sabur had presented an exposition of what one writer called "a spiritual view of Poetry"<sup>7</sup> in this same book<sup>8</sup>,

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4. Ṣ. ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, "Tajribatī fi 'l-Shiʿr", *Fuṣūl*, vol.ii:1 (1981), p. 5.

5. A.A. Zāyed, *Istidʿāʾu 'l-Shakhsīyya 'l-Turāthiyya fi 'l-Shiʿr al-Ḥadīth*, (Tripoli, 1978), p. 132.

6. Ṣ. ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fi 'l-Shiʿr*, in *al-ʿAṣmālu 'l-Kāmila*, vol. 3, p. 219.

7. M.M. Badawi, *Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1975), p. 218.

8. To be referred to henceforth, as *My Life In Poetry*.



that he (Sabur) regarded akin to Mysticism. It was he, among modern Arab poets in fact, who noticed how the Sufis were the first to express their quest for Truth as a "journey". This he used to depict his tiresome 'voyage' into the world of Poetry, for the "birth of words", and the bringing forth of what Baudelaire once called "the incantatory bewitchment of words".

Of all the writers about aspects of Mysticism and the Poetic Creativity, it was probably 'Izzu 'l-Dīn Ismā'īl who was able to put a finger on two major differences. He realized that as both the Sufi and the Poet heavily rely on "contemplation and discovery", the Sufi can express the luminous visions he sees only during the early stages of his 'journey'. As he goes farther along the 'road', he loses this ability of expression.

"As a matter of fact, you usually find him unwilling to venture into any such description, as he so advances into it."<sup>9</sup>

The Poet on the other hand, says (i.e. expresses) as soon as he sees<sup>10</sup>. Vision to him is the means of an expression; and such is true to all of the stages of his experience.

The second thing concerns the object of vision. While "at all times and all stages", it is clear to the Poet, it is illusive for the Sufi. Even when a poet undergoes an experience

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9. 'I. Ismā'īl, *al-Shi'ru 'l-'Arabī 'l-Mucāṣṣir: Qaḍāyah wa Zawāhiruhū 'l-Fanniyah*, 5th impr. (1988), p. 195.

10. See Ibid.



that is mystical in nature -and this often happens- it is noticed that it remains always "in clear contrast to the pure Sufi vision" with objects always present, clear, and well-defined.<sup>11</sup>

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The following four points sums up the most recurrent of mystical values (themes) in modern Arabic poetry, in general<sup>12</sup>, and the poetry of ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr in particular<sup>13</sup> :

1. A 'theosophic' withdrawal from practical life, where Sufi 'Zuhhād' (Ascetics) were known to have casted out the "life of the flesh" for that of the soul.
2. A complete loss of individuality (the poet's I-ness). "As the modern poet gets closer to the object of his vision, he becomes integrated into other creations of the world", losing thereby those aspects of his self that set him different (from other creations).
3. The concept of the Unity of Being (Waḥdatu 'l-Wujūd) as conceptualized by Ibn ʿArabī, that amounts in the long run to a Utopian-like unity, where a higher reality (the Divine Being) becomes manifest in the images of the lower creation. "Existence of the world becomes, in a sense, what a shadow is to the object it reflects"<sup>14</sup>.
4. The constant alienation, and restless state in which the Sufi/Poet lives, makes his life lonesome. And as the Sufi had always looked forward to the day he will be redeemed

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11. Ibid.

12. M. Haddāra, op. cit., p. 227.

13. M. Walīd, "Aḥlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qadīm", *Fuṣūl*, ii:1, (1981), p. 94.

14. Haddāra, op. cit., p. 236.



of his physical burden (his body), the modern poet's suffering too, becomes "as timeless and limitless" as his quest:

("Let us be strangers in the deserts and plains of our life/ Let us be daily broken twice;/ Once when we face the light/ And once when the sun melts at sunset/ For we wanted to see what is vaster than our eyes" Ughniya Ila 'l-Lāh).<sup>15</sup>

As it turned out, traditional Sufi images such as the use of sensual beauty as a means of discerning the Reality, Love as the expression of the highest form of human will, and rebelling against harsh reality, that is usually connected with the Sufi's constant attempt at shakking-off the chains of earth-ness and materiality, came to dominate 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's application of ("expression through", in the language of Zāyed) the Sufi phenomena "language, vision, and personae"<sup>16</sup>.

Subsequent upon that, one notices how in 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's attempt to "turn his poem into a complete experience of the inner soul", his poetic experience was always accentuated by sufi symbolism, an aspect of the Sufi culture he is greatly indebted to.

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15. (...Linatagharrab fī qifāri 'l-ʿumri wa 'l-Suhūb  
Wa 'lnankasir fī kulli yawmin marratayn  
Fa marratan ḥīna nuqābilu 'l-diyā'  
Wa marratan ḥīna tadhūbu 'l-shamsu fī 'l-ghurūb  
Faḡad aradnā an narā awsaʿa min aḡdāqinā".

See 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *Aḡlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qādim*, 5th impression, Daru 'l-Ṣhurūq (Cairo, 1986), p. 16. Transliteration of quoted texts may, henceforth, be referred to under the serial number given at the end of each text, in the appendix to this study.

16. A. A. Zāyed, op. cit., p.132.



Lastly, Mysticism could be said to have captured modern poet's attention mainly because, due to its historical precedence, it has a set of values and expressions that this poet sees capable of bringing forth aspects of his poetry that will otherwise remain dark and vague, and could represent the values by shaping them into understandable forms, and help the poet in gaining proper entrance into dark sides of the human soul, as illusive as it appears.

'Mystical dimension', is the influence of this type of mysticism in the poetry of Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, and in the poems of the collection, *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*. And as we will shortly see, the shape of this poetry is closely connected to (and could in fact, be said to owe its very existence to) the poet's early choice of this as the main vehicle for his experience.

Choice of one particular collection for study, should also be seen as giving of a practical picture of the shape and nature of this influence in the poet's creative output; meaning basically, lyrical poems. (Non-lyrical works, like drama, are therefore, out of the range of this study.)

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## Review Of Related Literature:

As early as 1964, a writer presented a thesis on *Dreams of The Ancient Knight* to the effect that Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr was only exploiting in this collection, the "means within which lies man's only hope for salvation (al-Khalās)", in what Luwīs ʿAwaḍ calla Ṣabūr's "positivism". "The way to salvation is across two ways", he explains, "death, and love"<sup>17</sup>.

Death, however, acquires a new meaning as it is associated with birth: ("Let us be broken twice/ Once when we face light/ And once when the sun melts at sunset" Ughniya ila 'l-Lāh<sup>18</sup>). So also is the way to *wuṣūl* (the realization of unity into the Godhead); as is depicted in the way human beings strive for the impossible (i.e. reaching to heaven) ahead of which stands a gap as wide as earth and heaven.

Besides this, ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr was seen by ʿAwaḍ to believe that human beings are responsible for the doom that befalls them. They have always exceeded the limits set for the human ability for understanding and of acquiring knowledge; into a territory strictly 'out of bounds' except for the gods<sup>19</sup> in the form of the "Tree of Life" or "Tree of Knowledge".

ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's outlook, according to ʿAwaḍ, in short, is that,

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17. L. ʿAwaḍ, *al-Thawra wa 'l-Adab*, (Cairo, 1967), p. 107.

18. Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *Aḥlām...*, op. cit, p. 16.

19. Ibid, p. 108, 109.



"man's first mistake came with death; Sabur's synonym for birth and life. From these man has no salvation but to seek the eternal bliss of the Divine Being, by destroying this physical life and merging into the God-essence that is in him."<sup>20</sup>

The assumption that Sabur sees in life and death only same things, and that death is the only way for life, however, was concluded on the basis of his saying:

"O great Lord, O our God  
Is it not enough that we are dead  
with no shrouds  
So you also humiliate our vanity and our  
pride?  
O great Lord O my torturer  
O weaver of dreams in the eyes  
... ..  
You have chosen for me  
How often You afflicted me!  
Have I not been saved yet?  
Or have You forgotten me?  
Woe to me!  
You have forgotten me  
You have forgotten me." (App. 1.1)

Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr was seen later, in "Memoirs of The Ṣūfi Bishr" to conclude that the actual reason for man's failure in life was his lack of faith. He (man) brought upon himself this wrath, when, instead of "creating human beings that are complete, out of the will he was bestowed by God",<sup>21</sup> he created devils. It all started when "God ceased to accept our devotion when we lost faith". Or, when the complete human being (al-Insānu 'l-Insān) ceased to inhabit this plagued earth.

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20. Ibid, p. 109, 110.

21. Ibid.



At the long run, this philosophy of death becomes interpreted by ʿAwaḍ as "another type of Maʿarrian pessimism", that amounts to the poet wishing he was never born.

Love in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*, on the other hand, is seen to be a mixture of religion and sex, as is found in Sufi thought, where it becomes man's way for redemption. Specially significant to it, however, is the Sufi concept of "Divine Love" and "Wajd". This is also closely connected to what the writer earlier said about the inter-relatedness of the symbols of innocence, virginity, and childhood in ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's poetry.

Madiḥa ʿĀmir attempted to relate this concept of Love to the poet's personal experiences in love, to the constant failure of which she relegates the other central theme in the collection; the sadness that dominated the poet's vision. She also indicated as ʿAwaḍ, what she claimed to be the poet's idea of how man-woman relation should be. One of togetherness, friendliness, and sharing, rather than "dissolving into each other"<sup>22</sup> as ʿAbdu 'l-Sabur kept dual, and at all times, elements of his vision: "two boughs of a tree/ two close stars/ twin waves/ two tender wings of a seagull", in the poem "Dreams of The Ancient Knight".

But Muḥammad Badawī, reads different from "A Song From Vienna" in the part which the poet holds "discussion" with his love's "white body"; that such relation is figurative, and the

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22. M. ʿĀmir, *Qiyam Jamāliyya wa Fanniyya fī Shīʿr Ṣ. ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr*, (Cairo, 1984) p. 203, 204



fact that this discussion the poet was holding is in the form of an interrogation, it showed the process of the poet's "dissolve" into the "questioned" object<sup>23</sup> which in this poem, is practically and physically absent<sup>24</sup>. 'Abdu 'l-Sabur said:

"Ah, her white body, speak: are you a voice?  
 Together we talked last night  
 Are you a bright greenness?  
 I often wandered about in your gardens  
 Happy and content  
 Speak: are you a wine?  
 Beverage, liquor, and foam I drank from your marbled brims  
 Ah, her white body twin of angel's thoughts". (App. 1.2)

This is obviously an expression of the poet's thirst for knowledge of the nature of the Divine Being particularly, on which the writer's concept of "absence", (al-Ghiyāb 'alā mustawā 'l-Hudūri 'l-fi'li), becomes quite implicating as to the nature and extent of this introspection. For, what is actually suggested by him, is that this idea of love, as is explicated in this poem is of a special nature. He fundamentally agrees with the previous interpretation of this love as "the only way for salvation"<sup>25</sup>, but looking at the general meaning of the poem "Dreams of Ancient Knight", especially the following often quoted part,

"No, it is only *you* who can make me again the Ancient Knight",

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 23. He remarks on the fact that it was the poet who always asks the questions.

24. M. Badawī, *al-Jahīmu 'l-Ardī*, G.E.B.C., (Cairo, 1986), p. 155.

25. L. 'Awad, op. cit. 124.



he disagrees with ʿAwaḍ on the referent of the pronoun 'you', which the latter proved as referring to God (as is evident in the 'Fatha' that appears on the masculine pronoun).

"That could be right", countered Badawī. "But the fact that the context, together with the word 'My sweet' that initiated this part of the poem, shows, even if not so clearly, the poet's belief that his aim is only going to be realized through love. As a matter of fact", he goes further to say, "the poet is using both levels of meanings, as to appear in the pronoun looking like referring to God this time, and to the beloved the next, so as to combine in his beloved the two complementing symbols, in a fostered unity."<sup>26</sup>

Fact of the matter is, however, that what is referred to here is one thing not two, as the beloved (only you) is nothing but a theophany of God (only Thou), that is also derivable from the pronoun.

Another writer, Muḥammad Mustāḥfa Badawī, being more interested in ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's turn from "poetry of commitment" to the "humanist and socialist ideal", noticed what he termed the poet's "tendency towards introspection" in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*, and stopped at the first (after the "Prologue") and the last poems. While the first entitled "A Song For The Winter" stated the poet's sin as: Poetry, for which he has been crucified, the last "Memoirs of The Sufi Bishr" revealed his em-

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26. M. Badawī, op. cit., p.180.



powering pessimism that saw and felt the world "infected and diseased beyond all cure", where man is a sorry sight in the eyes of the Lord. This the writer saw as the

"increasing personal vision, which alternates between mild form of Mysticism and melancholy of meditation on death, ... and despair",

that was initiated in the poet's first collection. He saw "a Mystical trend" beginning only in *I Say Unto You*<sup>27</sup>.

ʿIzzu ʿl-Dīn Ismāʿīl,<sup>28</sup> however, argued that the typical archtypal patterns of the "Seeker of Truth" and "Seeker of Love", traditionally known to be existent in Faust and Don Juan, had been two separate entities in the world literature. But there came a time when the human race realized the crossroads on which their meeting become possible, and only then was it realized how inseparably one they actually are. Still, the two archtypes were never envisioned as united into one entity, until ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr, who, in his poetic creation encompassed the two types into "one unified structure". Inseparable as they now appear, they have unified motives, visions, and aim.

Hence, it was his poetry, by its special nature that fits into the two modes of quests (for Truth and for Love), that was all the while the deciding element for this merger. A no small contribution that ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr offers, in his opinion, to human civilization.

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27. Ibid.

28. ʿI. Ismāʿīl, "ʿĀshiqu ʿl-Ḥikma, Ḥakīmu ʿl-ʿIshq", *Fuṣūl* ii:1 (1981), p. 37-50).



What he failed to point out, however, was the fact that ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr, in shaping this experience of his in such a way, was in turn being influenced by Mysticism in the special way it depicts the structural unity of outlook to the two types of quests; and as it turned out, his poetry equally owed its vivid imagery and vision, in the two "most persistent" themes to have bothered his conscience and emotion in this collection; the morally-barren human being of the modern world, and his "deseased God-forsaken world", to the same mysticism.

Examining the possibility of changing this horrible human situation, was seen by Walīd Munīr to be the aim in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*<sup>29</sup>. Despair over the so many odds that are against such a change, Walid argues, was behind the poet's image of death as the only redeemer. But he also pointed out that as much as this death was to the poet, "a means of withdrawal from the world", it was also "resurrection and re-birth". He goes a step further than ʿAwaḍ and ʿĀmir, however, to connect this to the Sufi concept of the Unity of Being, (Waḥdat al-Wujūd). It came as no surprise to him, therefore, when he realized in Sufism "the most dominant factor in Sabur's poetry, in general, and poems of this collection specifically"<sup>30</sup>, especially in its content and style.

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29. M. Walīd, op. cit., p. 93-102.

30. Ibid.



In content, he draws the major ideological issues this collection had enlisted: barrenness, solititude, melancholy, despair, and the constant attempt at penetrating the surface of the worldly phenomena<sup>31</sup>.

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There appears to be three areas in the poetry of 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr that the influence of the mystical phenomena is even more apparent: his constant use of the Sufi mask, Sufi thought, and Sufi vocabulary.

Under the first area one could enumerate the poet's most favorite masks;

(i) Personalities of Prophets, (especially in their pursuit of human ideal of truth and justice, and the comprehension of reality, as contained in their messages and revelation. And as was earlier seen, the esoteric aspects of these revelations.) A masterful use of which enlisted various aspects of behavior of the prophets Muḥammad and Jesus;

(ii) the mystics, Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj on the life of whom he had a basis for one of his dramas *The Tragedy of al-Hallaj*, and Bishr al-Ḥafī under whose mask the poet showed his mistrust of the world, and the despair inherent in his responsibility as a poet, of drawing a plan for the redemption of humanity and guiding it towards a more worthwhile living and lasting ideals.

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31. Ibid, p. 95,96.



Another mask, ʿAjīb bn al-Khaṣīb, taken from *One Thousand and One Nights* and artfully used in the collection under study, fits also into this category. Though not originally a Sufi mask, this poetry bestowed on ʿAjīb a touch of mysticism, as it depicted him as another "Seeker of Truth". The same could be said about the ghost of Sindbad that is hanging about these poems, but which assumed a central position in a subsequent work.

On the second level of Sufi thought and vision, is the concern with "man" as the center of the experience into the human soul. And as a verse in the Qur'an (xcv:45) shows the situation of man in this world as, at once, "perennial and Universal"<sup>32</sup>, man was created in "the best of stature" (Fī aḥsani taqwīm) but he fell into the sad condition of separation and withdrawal from his divine prototype (a condition which the Qur'an calls "the lowest of the low"). And inasmuch as this pertains to the innermost nature of man, it is a permanent reality that he carries within himself this prototype<sup>33</sup>. And according to the hadith, "God created Adam (man) in his own image".

The wretchedness and misery man finds himself in, therefore, is seen in this type of mysticism to be due to this very separation from spiritual origin, and the fall from this innate perfection which yet he cannot forget.<sup>34</sup> In fact, "the whole

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32. S.H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, (New York, 1972), p. 25.

33. Ibid.

34. For a complete exposition of this vision, however, see *ibid*, p.25-28.



program of Sufism of the spiritual way...is to free man from the prison of multiplicity, to cure him from hypocrisy, and to make him whole, for it is only in being whole that man can become holy."<sup>35</sup>

This strive of man for Unity with this prototype, is what 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr was relentlessly showing through his poetry, against which two 'courses of action' (Intuition/Intellect, Love/Knowledge, Innocence/Experience, etc.) always interplay. His perpetual melancholy, too, was in the same sense.

Sufi vocabulary on the other hand, furnished the language of this poetry with a rich blend of imagery, terms, and phrases.

These are the three levels of the usage of mysticism in this collection, and will therefore, form the background upon which discussion in the following chapters will be centered.

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35. Ibid, p. 43.



## CHAPTER II

### Trend of Mystical Influence Prior to *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*

It may be appropriate in following up the mystical trend believed to be in the poetry of Ṣalāh ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr in its structural form, to start with what Muḥammad Badawī, had said about the ideological trend in this poetry, when he sifted out what he saw as forming "the poet's special outlook".

Dreaming of changing the world in *People of My Country*, ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr had lived for sometime believing in this dream. To see it come crushing down therefore, was a bit more than he could bear. His disappointment with the world in *I Say Unto You* was the result of this. In *Dreams of The Ancient Knight* however, he is seen to be cursing the same crumbled, once ideal world, seeing it a mere prison that is "worse than hell". The same could said to be the theme in *Meditation In A Wounded Time*.<sup>1</sup>

A last stage was seen by Badawi to be represented by the two collections *Night Tree* and *Sailing Into Memory*, in which the poet is seen to be clearly "escaping" from this prison/hell. Consequently, each of these collection cast light on the poet's point of shift of emphasis in his vision.<sup>2</sup>

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1. M. Badawi, op. cit., p. 11.

2. Ibid, p. 12.



This I see as curious in the sense that this same range of vision said to be prevailing in the respective collections, is what this study is all out to prove as the influence of mysticism in the poetry of ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr.

Starting with *People of My Country*, ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr had been pursuing and building up an outlook of the world, from the time he sang the "Song of Allegiance" in this collection, which, seen from an absolutely poetic point of view, is in fact, a pledge of loyalty to a course:

"For you I have made/ A plushed throne/ Out of a soft velvet/ Carved out of sandalwood/ And two pillows/ For you to recline on./ From the slave-market I have brought two concubines/ Out of the best vine-tree, I have distilled two grapevines/ Into a crystal tumbler/ I then lighted a lamp/ Which I put into an opening in the side of the wall/ From it comes a silver-coated, dignified light/ And it's strange shadow/ In a world that's wrapped around it's faded cloth/ It is way into the night/ And you are yet to arrive, my lovely visitor.

I have demolished what I built/ And have lost whatever I had acquired of wealth/ To you I will journey/ As naked as I was born, with only this cloak I am wrapping, I come to you/. Asking the forebearers/ About your strange and horrific land of secrets/ At the peak of the evening-/ When darkness is a black tent/ Relentlessly I journeyed on/ Across valleys;/ Over hills and mountains,/  
.



All the while asking the forebearers/ "Whoever desires life, should die for love"/ Here I am thrown onto the wall/ Having already buried my humble heart in fantasy.

My torturer, O my beloved/ My torturer, O my beloved/ Can't I have, in the exalted company/ Some affection?/ Even if it were just a sign of caring?/ I am obedient to you/ I am an obedient servant/ With your permission, however,/ I could be a good night companion in a drinking session/ My story is full of the fantastic;/ Found nowhere in story books/ My manners are as tender as a wine in a glass/ With your kindness/ Could I be looked upon passionately/ Even if once?/ I, too, can be as soft to my dear ones/ Am I deprived of a place/ Within this deep heart of yours!/ I had already broken, for your love, my human form/ And now it is too late/ There is no going back". (App. 2.1)

In his vision of what the relationship is between a poet and poetry, how this poet should be completely free for it, and how he eventually has to "annihilate" into it, ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr could not find a more appropriate means for the conveyance of this anywhere but in the mystical tradition of the Sufis. What should be noticed here however, is the way he used the Sufi concept of Divine Love wherein lovers get united into an indivisible whole to equally depict his love (loyalty) for poetry; and the way this beloved never acknowledges this love. The poet having gone to a lot of trouble in anticipation of a visit from



the beloved (poetry), having sacrificed everything, and being even ready to offer his life as a sacrifice, sincerely believes in the saying: "Whoever dies as a true lover, dies as a martyre",<sup>3</sup> all for the sake of a moment of togetherness with this beloved. (Which he never had). The Sufis too, claim to die "fī sabili 'l-Lāh" (on the path of God) as martyrs, in their elaboration of the diction ascribed to the prophet: "who loves and remains chaste and dies, dies as a martyre" which is what helped build up this foundation in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

One could also notice in this poem the evolution of the basic elements of vision with which the poet is to tell of his quest in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*. Lamp, light, night, heart, and love, were moulded into symbols that came to assume a meaning, within a special contextual framework, as personal and special as the poet's quest. Expressions such as:

-Qaṭṭartu min karmi 'l-jinān  
 -Asrajtū miṣbāḥan  
 -Usā'ilu 'l-ruwwād  
 -Man arāda an ya'īsha falyamut shahīda 'ishqi  
 -Alaysa lī fī 'l-majlisi 'l-saniyyi ḥabwata 'l-tabiye  
 -Kassartu ṭīnata 'l-insān.

and the use of the structure:

Sentence= Nominal phrase + Verbal phrase.  
 NP= Ya(vocative particle) + the person  
 or thing called upon (adjectival  
 phrase usually)+ the same NP struc-  
 ture said one or more times.  
 VP= ... ..

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 3. He actually said: Man arāda an ya'īsha falyamut shahīda 'ishqi.

4. A. Schimmel, *As Though Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam*, Columbia University Press, (New York, 1982) p. 222.



(e.g. in this poem: Yā ayyuha 'l-ḥabību/ Yā Mu'adhdhibī/ A laysa...)

the nominal phrase of which almost always contains the same grammatical classes; which also came to represent (in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*) a major milestone in the poet's journey towards reality.

In the "Little God", 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr set his purpose (that could be purely seen to be mystical in nature) which 'Awaḍ later encapsuled in a theory of "Redemption by Love". However, any attentive reader of 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr could easily see the inter-relatedness of his account in this poem, to such Sufi concepts as Unity of Being, Purity, and Innocence, as the only means of achieving this unity he had sought.

" I once had a god, whose house was my refuge/ Once he said to me: the path of rose is bumpy, but I climbed upon it/ When I looked back, he was not behind me/ Then I heard wind's voice weeping;/ I, too, weeped for losing him/ Alone was I, one day, aimlessly walking about in a desert/ When I saw my little god flush-faced, with cheeks tinted into the colour of a rose/ My god and I danced for breeze, with our cheeks together/ In the middle of waves and roses, we then slept/ My god and I.

My little god was then only a child/ And as a child, I too, worshipped my god/ Although he was loved by everything in the garden/ I was his proud owner!



I kept kissing my god at the singing of every other  
bird/ Kept hugging him at every stir of the night and  
of imagination.

Once we strolled, me and my god, into the night/ At  
the most passionate hour of the night/ When passion  
becomes mysterious and incomprehensible/ We inhaled  
nectar/ And kissed hands/ We witnessed the birth of  
breeze/ At the middle of the night/ And in the morn-  
ing, like twins, we returned/ In the garb of morning.

How can you then refuse me, god?/ Refusing my  
advances!/ Aimlessly I called your name/ Until I be-  
came tired/ Only silence echoed back into my ears./  
But confused, I clung to hope/ And hopefully I con-  
versed with your image in my mind./ Could it be that  
you are gone/ Or is it me that does/ No more feels for  
you?." (App. 2.2)

But as the poet is not required to offer lasting solutions  
to the contradictions of nature for the simple fact that he does  
not have such solutions, "Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr could equally be noticed  
here, as only feeling these contradictions and identifying them  
as a side of the unity there is, between God and elements of  
creation.

The last part of this poem is of a special significance to  
the argument presented here, in that the questions it raises that  
other poems are to subsequently incorporate, is one that has been  
known within the mystic cycle, in almost all of its forms, Chris-  
tian, Islamic, etc.<sup>5</sup> It is the question: which is the quickest



most convenient route for reaching to the Divine, the Absolute, and the Metaphysical? Is it through the "absolute and unqualified" submission of the heart, intuitively and without looking for justification,<sup>6</sup> or, by means of knowledge, logic, and the seeking of material evidence that proves the existence and nature of this Absolute?

This last unanswerable question which ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr posed, "A turā ruḥta ami 'l-wajdu 'l-ladhī dāʿa bi ʿaynī!?" gives the clue to the subsequent "change of heart" portrayed in the poet's:

Unādīk ---> aʿayā  
Unādīk ---> yasuddu 'l-ṣamtu udhunī.

Later in *I Say Unto You*, this was explained in detail when he called on human beings to come forth, feed on his table, and sail with him into the deep seas, in search of certainty (reality):

"Come to me... Over here

... ..

A bread we will eat

Dipped into ages of wisdom

Into the impetuous manner of our cheerful time

We will tear a part

And offer our thanks

To our guided heart

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5. See ʿAwad, op. cit., on his account of two Christian saints, in their similar argument; and Cobin's *Creative Imagination in The Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, and Schimmel, op. cit., p.40-41 on Ibn Arabi's theory of numbers.

6. And this is always characterized by the words childhood, innocence, love, and virginity, in ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's vision.



So it may set us safely

On the banks of certainty". (App. 2.3)

Of relevance however, is the role of both intuition (heart) and experience (which in "I Say Unto You: the saint" is symbolized by books and pen), as figured by the poet in his journey. And as he explained in the following passage, he has seen logic and intellect quite irrelevant for his search after certainty, holding to which is as misleading as is useless:

"Intellect had surely misled us

Off our course

Come to me

In books I had often journeyed

My pen is even dry

And my horse tired.

I now have realized

How I was carried away by illusions and inadvertence

For so many years

Into the very center of importunity

And the darkness of logic". (App. 2.4)

It is nothing but a pointless argument that which logic and philosophy offers,

"That a river is not the river

Nor is man the human being

That the reality about this world lies buried in a cave

That this reality is only worth the value of dimes and  
nickles

Or that God fell asleep, after going through with the act  
of creation".<sup>7</sup>

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7. Bi anna 'l-nahra laysa 'l-nahra  
Wa 'l-insāna la 'l-insān

Wa anna ḥaqīqata 'l-dunyā ṭhawāt fī kahf

Wa anna ḥaqīqata 'l-dunyā hiya 'l-falasāni fawqa 'l-kaff



"So was my position", says ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr.

But as it happened one morning; heeding the call of his heart, he witnessed it all:

"I witnessed the reality of the world:  
I heard stars, seas, and flowers  
All attuned into a harmony  
I witnessed God in my heart  
For, when -one morning-  
I woke up;  
I threw the books into fire.  
Then I opened my window  
And in the breathing of the exuding forenoon  
I went out to the streets;  
To watch passers-by  
And those striving for a living.  
Under the shades in the gardens  
I saw folks and folks of lovers  
In a moment I felt my ill-ridden heart  
Beating as fast and as strong,  
As the heart-beats of the Sun  
I felt I have been filled  
All around my heart, with wisdom  
I felt as if I have been made holy  
And have been assigned the duty of  
Making you holy". (App. 2.5)

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Wa anna ʿl-Lāha qad khalāqa ʿl-anāma wa nām.  
See ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr, *Aqūlu Lakum*, Daru ʿl-Shurūq, (Cairo, 1982), p.86.



It is this struggle between the heart and the mind, and the captivating account of this moment of "tajallī"<sup>8</sup> that later explains the poet's rather romantic yearning for virginity in his poem "Dreams of The Ancient Knight", when he said:

"I was once in bygone days  
 O my enchantress, a steadfast warrior, a heroic knight  
 .....  
 I used to dwell in unending spring -what a spring!  
 When I wept my weeping would convulse me  
 And I would wish, on hearing the laments  
 Of the wretched and the weak  
 That I could nourish them from my grieving heart  
 .....  
 I was carefree when I laughed as if a brook  
 Whose pure face shows an image of the stars  
 What befell the heroic knight?  
 His heart was plucked out and he took to flight dropping  
 the reins  
 .....  
 O you who guide my steps on the path of guileless tears  
 O you who guide my steps on the path of guileless laughter  
 .....  
 I offer you the experience and skill bestowed on me by the  
 world  
 In return for a single day of innocence". (App. 2.6)

Besides these, themes since People of My Country came to be coated with a bitterness<sup>9</sup> that portrayed people as "ferocious like the falcons", and in I Say Unto You with despair<sup>10</sup> in which the world was seen as a place where "man's shadow" becomes "his crucifix". In Dreams of The Ancient Knight however, Ṣabūr was

8. "The appearance, in the heart of the seeker (of truth), of the Divine light (i.e. knowledge of its true nature)". See M. Hifny, *Muʿjamu 'l-Muṣṭalahāti 'l-Ṣūfiyya*, Maktabat Madbūli, (Cairo, 1981), p. 42.

9. L. ʿAwad, op. cit., p. 106.

10. M.M. Badawī, op. cit., p. 216.



able to rid his poetry of this bitterness. In its place was a "deep sadness that colors everything within the range of his vision".

Consequently (i.e. in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*), 'Abdu 'l-Sabūr was able to transcend in his poetry, what was individualistic and personal in his experience and vision, to reach to what is general and human.<sup>11</sup> From manifestations of existence to existence in its absolute form. We clearly hear his voice chanting, not the personal as was the case previously, but what is human: man vis-a-vis existence. It was also this early encounter with bitterness, despair, and sadness, that later transformed them into a mystical despair, that metamorphosised in a time-free zone where life becomes death, and both life and death becomes resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

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11. L. 'Awad, op. cit., p. 107.

12. M. Haddāra, op. cit., p. 241.



## CHAPTER III

### DREAMS OF THE ANCIENT KNIGHT

#### 1. **Introductory:**

There are two sides to the mysticism that Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr had enlisted in this collection: a general religious tendency that has in the esoteric aspects of revelations a source of inspiration, usually through masks of Prophets<sup>1</sup>; and mysticism in its institutional sense. These two sides formed what could be called the mystical dimension of this poetry, in what it proved of similarity to ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's quest through poetry, for the (knowledge of) the Truth, and in relying solely on 'intuition' and the 'heart', rather than 'logic' or 'experience'.

There are, first of all, similarities in the ultimate aim of this experience, and in journeying to it, in both Mysticism and poetry; then there is also the common source of inspiration both has in intuition, as earlier indicated, and common means<sup>2</sup>.

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1. See Chapter I, above.

2. "Means" should necessarily be confined here, to the alternate and respective use of symbolism in poetry and mysticism, by the Sufi and the Poet, as should be seen to relate only to the institutional meaning of Mysticism and to poetry. Excluding therefore the esoteric aspects of revelations as mentioned earlier, as Prophets use an altogether different means [language] for the expression of this revelation.



Similar also are their sufferings, and the sacrifices each of them (the poet, the mystic, and the prophet) has to undergo and offer. All the three also, live in a perpetual state of despair, as they painfully become helpless against the sad condition of the world, and the unheeding human being that fails to listen to their guiding voices.

Different, however, is the mystic from the poet in that the former usually steps unto self-denial and retreat from this world, to that ultimate aim (which is in this case, unity with the Godhead). While the latter does so only through "penetrating the world". This is specially true to 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's "Seeker of Truth".

And as it might have been noticed earlier, in the poem subtitled "The Saint", this Seeker of Truth was able to "see God" mirrored in his heart, only after stepping down into the world. This has been in I Say Unto You.

In this collection, too, it became one of the roles of the mask of Bishr al-Hafī<sup>3</sup> who having been accused of being only too emotional about the sad "sight" of the world ("in ruins") he proved his point by taking "his Shaykh" on a tour of the world ("the market")

"The Shaykh and I went to the market  
The snake-man was trying to wrap himself round the crane-  
man  
Between them walked the fox-man

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3. And of Sindbad in al-Ibhār fi 'l-Dhākirah henceforth Sailing Into Memory.



How strange!:

The throat of the crane-man is now between the jaws of the fox-man

There came the dog-man;

To pluck out the eyes of the fox-man,

And tread on the head of the snake-man.

But the market quivered under the steps of the panther-man

He came to open the belly of the dog-man,

To squeeze the marrow out of the fox-man"

By God,

"Where is *the* human-man here?!". (App. 2.8)

In another instance (Ughniya Min Vienna), the poet is seen at the end of what looks like revelation (symbolized by "Her White Body" i.e the absolute *Feminine Element*<sup>4</sup>) to descend into the world, having searched hard in philosophy and logic, amongst elements of nature, and even in the make-believe world of intoxication and hashish. It was after having settled at the long run, for purity and innocence as the major characteristics of this element, that he goes down:

"When the sun at the crossroads

Stretched its beautiful arms

Its dreadful arms;

When the pointed fingers of the city,

Knocked at our windowpanes as if pushing us away

... ..

We clasped our hands

And embraced

... then parted

Our steps drew apart

Descending the old stairs unto the road, all sullen".

(App. 2.9)

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4. See above Ch.iii, 2(i).



The sun here is the symbol of both the "eternal fountain of Knowledge" as is seen in Sufi symbolism<sup>5</sup> in which case the "beautiful arms" will be what was extended to the poet; and of the Divine will and power that destines man to a blind fate ("It extended its dreadful arms/ Knocked at our windowpanes as if pushing us away/ Go! Where shall we go?"). A fate that blindly leads man through a life of suffering, to death, who -in turn- leads others, unknowingly to it ("When we mixed with the crowd/ Which was hastening towards bread/ And death/ Pushing his child in a hurry, a man separated us").

"The descent to the inferno is the means whereby the soul recovers its lost and hidden elements in dark and lethal depths before being able to make the ascent to 'purgatory' and paradise"<sup>6</sup>. Or as ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr himself puts it:

"Aim in existence is ... for man to return an innocence borne out of a practical experience in life. Isn't gold purer coming out of fire, than it is before going into the fire?"<sup>7</sup>

But at this stage the poet is seen still questioning the basis of Divine Justice in all these. And it was the unsatisfactory answer of which constantly kept taking away from him, not only the pleasure usually accompanying the discovery of this reality, *Nashwat al-kashf*, but also unity:

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5. See al-Jurjāni's *Kitāb al-Taʿrīfāt*, and Hifny, op. cit., p.141.

6. S. H. Nasr, op. cit., p. 47.

7. S. ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fi 'l-Shier*, p.159.



- "Where the road began, her arm slipped away  
 In the middle, it slipped, ...  
 At the end of the road I wished I could see the color of  
 her eyes. But I could not.  
 As we were about to reach the square, she softly  
 murmured,  
 I wondered then, was she asking: Who are you?"

- "And when we met I realized that  
 We would part".

(App. 2.10)

That is also, in my opinion, the reason behind the recurrence of the themes of 'Unity' and 'wuṣūl' in this poetry and the usual short-life of the *Nashwat al-Kashf*.

Closely connected to this, however, is the poet's similar realization of the heavy responsibility that lies on his shoulders of taking the hands of the mankind towards emancipation and redemption

"Shacartu bi annanī aṣbaḥtu qiddīsan  
 Wa anna risālatī hiya:  
 an uqaddisakum".

As a result of which he focused his "search light" onto the world of the human soul in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*, sending warnings to mankind.

In "Memoirs of King ʿAjīb bn Khaṣīb", therefore, he is seen "dangling" as a result of the curse he had earned, as he turned himself into a self-appointed prophet, (i.e in choosing to be a poet). He has no place in heaven.<sup>8</sup>

8. This is a theme Sabur fully developed in *Sailing Into Memory* through a masterful use of the Qur'anic verse, "Go thou forth hence, thou art accursed!".



"Lo servants of the palace, guards, soldiers,  
 Officers, leaders,  
 This is a royal decree!  
 Spread a well-knit net round the globe  
 For your dangling king to fall in". (App. 2.11)

in both instances, it could be noticed, he *returns* to earth.

Equally related to this feeling of responsibility that necessitated for the poet this penetration of the world, is 'Abdu 'l-Sabur's attitude towards the expression of his visions "as he sees them" against the traditional Sufi Silence, as he portrayed al-Ḥallāj in *The Tragedy of al-Ḥallāj* having revealed the "secrets of love", as deserving execution<sup>9</sup> and thus saqaṭat murū'atuhu amāma 'l-Lāh"<sup>10</sup>. Even the very frequent "Please, I beg silence of you" in this poetry, is said in consideration of the devastating powers words have of depicting the awful creature this world is, in a most realistic and earthly image. And not out of reluctance in sharing these "secrets of love" as is the case in Islamic Mysticism, or out of love of symbolism.<sup>11</sup> 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr said:

"I speak in riddles  
 Because bare words  
 Are far too harsh  
 For only two lips to utter  
 But when words are wrapped up in rugs

9. See Ṣabūr, *al-A'mālu 'l-Kāmila*, vol.3, p. 504.

10. Ibid, p. 218.

11. Shiblī said the following regarding Sufi silence:  
 "Praise be to God that I am  
 Like a frog that dwells in the sea:  
 When he utters something his mouth is filled with water  
 But when he is silent he dies from grief".

See A. Schimmel, op. cit., p. 40.



They are more able to remove the cover  
From the body of reality  
That seemed like a nude truth". (App. 2.12)

This also includes his later out-spokenness in Sailing Into Memory, in disobeying *The Divine* command:

"- A Grand voice:

And He taught Adam the names, all of them  
Then He presented them unto the angels  
And said: "Now tell Me the names of these..."

- A Humble voice:

Oh, no!  
I daren't my Lord!  
How could I name all the names  
Do you, my Lord, hate me so much as to blow  
Into the hollow reed of my lean body  
The names that you for long had preserved  
Relieve me of this task...  
...  
For I, for long, since the sun of your eyes  
Abandoned me  
Have sometimes hidden myself under the wall of metaphor  
In the hole of euphemism  
The crevice of obliquity". (App. 2.13)

Or when he said:

"O, my Lord  
You have made me drink  
To the point when  
Your wine got on  
To the secret recesses of my heart,  
You then bade me silence  
And here I am  
Choking, strangled with my secrets". (App. 2.14)

he did so a little while late, as the three "Abstractions"  
(Tajrīdāt) stopped at nothing in blaming the blind fate/destiny,  
that doomed human kind to a wretched living on earth that ends  
only in death. It was this fact that made the poet to, even,  
see all justice in this death:



... ..  
 For I, for long, since the sun of your eyes  
 Abandoned me  
 Have sometimes hidden myself under the wall of metaphor  
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 that doomed human kind to a wretched living on earth that ends  
 only in death. It was this fact that made the poet to, even,  
 see all justice in this death:

"God Thou art the Supreme Being. Thou hast afflicted us  
 with this suffering, this pain  
 God Thou art the Supreme Being. This universe is inflicted  
 There is no remedy  
 If thou treats us with justice, Thou wilt hasten our death  
 ... ..  
 Where is death? where is death?".<sup>12</sup> (App. 2.15)

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 12. On another level however, this longing for death - "death  
 being the bridge which finally unites the lover with the Beloved"  
 [Ibid, p. 30]- becomes mystical in nature, in the same sense it  
 came to acquire as "the central topic of all late Sufi poetry"  
 [ibid].



Of special relevance to the poetry of ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr also, is the life history of the prophet of Islam, and his struggle in Mecca against both natural calamities that kept befalling him, and against the people of Mecca.

In an article on "Muhammad As A Human Being", ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr reviewed this life history, and stopped long at the former's saying:

"Knowledge is my major capital, as Intellect is the basis of my faith. Love is my foundation, Desire my ship, and Invocation my company. In poverty lies my pride, in Certainty my saying, and in Despair my companion."

to explain how his life was one ruled by despair; from early childhood to old age. Death deprived him of almost all the people he loved, at a stage when he is in the darest need of their presence and support; his father, mother, grandfather, uncle, wife, sons, and daughters<sup>13</sup>. Mohammad, he says, "discovered -as a result- the death cycle" when he cried out to his people:

"al-Ḥayāt... thumma ʿl-Mawt... thumma ʿl-Ḥayāt".

(There is life, then death comes, then there will be life again)

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13. Sabur, "Moḥammad al-Insān", Ros el-Youssef, February 12, 1962, p. 30.



He marveled the man's patience in bearing so many misfortunes in his life. Something he delegates to what he calls "the secrets of Divine message and of Divine man"<sup>14</sup>

"Your life had been a mixture of love and pain". He concluded. "He should claim not that he knows you, therefore, he who does not know these two fountains of your life. Only sufferers and those in love will know the person you really were".<sup>15</sup>

These aspects of the prophet's behavior had so influenced Sabur's poetry to the extent that, attitudes towards the world, love, and despair, came in *Dreams of Ancient Knight* bearing these colouring. In as wide a range of poems as "A Song for Cairo", "Exodus", and "Memoirs of The Sufi Bishr". Obvious also is the use of this concept of death in a mystical sense in this poetry, as a means of achieving salvation, unity and immortality.

And because of the importance these aspects have to the set up of the poems of this collection, and the fact that they are not so different from mysticism<sup>16</sup> they will, as simply, be considered in this study, another of the mystical dimension in this poetry.

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14. Ibid, p. 31.

15. Ibid, February 26, p. 47.

16. As a matter of fact, it was some of these aspects that gave birth to certain concepts of Islamic mysticism.



To this one may add however, that 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr had often showed the connection there is between prophets, poets, and philosophers. In *My Life In Poetry* he saw these three as "the most able of all human beings" in realistically envisioning human life, penetrating the dark recesses of the human soul, and seeing beyond what ordinary human beings could see<sup>17</sup>. He also quoted the following saying of the prophet<sup>18</sup>

"I surely, see what you are unable to see, and hear what you are unable to hear. By God, was all I know to have come to your knowledge, you would have laughed less and wept more, ceased to enjoy women, and would have gone out onto the streets and committed shameful sins. By God, How I wish I were only a helpless tree. By God, I wish I am a helpless tree".

\*\*\*

Influence of mystical language in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight* shows in the language used for the purpose of the conveyance of the personal feelings and impressions of the poet, -as ambiguous as they are. Hence, this language was made suitable enough to contain the sparks of these feelings as they flash through the mind of the poet. It became -as a result- practically able to luminate visions, especially where issues of the similar Sufi concept of *Wajd* are at stake.

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17. See for instance, P. 126, 135, 138

18. Ibid, p. 97.



There is, however, one fact about this language that Muṣ-  
ṭapha al-Saʿdanī pointed out, of the use -in this poetry- of  
language to express images. One finds the same language becom-  
ing the image it is portraying in one and the same time<sup>19</sup>. This  
gives it an "equal share of dynamism and significance" with the  
image itself<sup>20</sup>. Which is what the poet indicated when he said:

"Be careful not to hear  
Or see  
Or touch  
Or speak  
Stop!  
Cling to the firm cord of silence  
The fountain of speech is deep  
As the hand is short  
Through the fingers  
Speech slips into the sand  
And because you do not know the meaning of words  
You fight me with words  
The word is a stone  
It is death  
By laying words upon other words  
Speech is produced;  
And the world will seem an ill-formed foetus  
You will wish to die  
So I beg silence of you  
Complete silence". (App. 2.16)

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19. M. al-Saʿdanī, *al-Binyātu 'l-Uslūbiyya fī Luḡhati 'l-Shiʿri*  
*'l-Ḥadīth*, (Cairo, 1987), p. 102.

20. Ibid.



## 2. MYSTICAL DIMENSION: Themes

Inasmuch as what was discussed previously are the poet's concern and cause of despair in Dreams of The Ancient Knight, he had invented for his "quest" symbols that are as poetic and masterly, as is the quest itself an "old, trampled, and painful path". Discussion of these symbols here will be through three major themes of the collection; love, predestination, and despair, each of which represents a major concept of mysticism, thus an influence of mysticism, in this poetry.

That these three are the major themes of Dreams of Ancient Knight, or that they are an influence of mysticism however, could be seen in the "Prologue" preceding poems of this collection.

"Forgive me, companions  
The trees are fruitless this year  
I had to offer you the humblest entertainment  
Not from miserliness. It is that my cellars are empty  
And my wheat-fields, barren  
Forgive me, friends  
The light is faint and scarce  
The only candle I found in my overcoat pocket  
Which I lit for you  
But it is old, and only shines of tears  
Forgive me! friends  
As my heart is sad  
There is no way I could talk in happy words". (App. 3.1)

If we are to divide this passage into three parts at the most natural points (the sentences beginning simultaneously with "Forgive me") we could notice how each passage is concerned with



one of the three themes, namely predestination, love, and despair respectively. Behind these however, lurks the omnipresence of "poetry" as the subject and object of concern.

Reading the passage with this in mind, one sees the special care taken in the choice of vocabulary. And as the "trees" symbolizes the knowledge of the true nature of the Truth or the source of this knowledge, the poet makes use of the functional connotation of the Arabic sentence structure in ("Lam tumṭiri 'l-Samā' / Lam tuṭhmiri 'l-ashjār") to relate the sad "harvest" he promises<sup>1</sup> the reader not to the miserly silence of the Sufi's, but to Fate. Nature has not been too kind to him, and against its better judgment, the human being stands helpless.

It is therefore, in spite of himself and as the self-appointed prophet of his people that, what he has to offer, though nothing to be reckoned with, is "the juice of his discoveries and journey to Reality". But as these discoveries are not in themselves, so very clear nor easy to comprehend ("The light is faint and scarce"), he paid for them dearly with sacrifices and sufferings, as he had taken it upon himself to "light the candle" for mankind, even at the expense of his personal happiness.

"Candle" and "candle-light" here, are symbols of this inspiration (light) he had received and is presenting in Dreams of The Ancient knight; and of the sacrifice. The fact that this

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1. He actually apologised.



candle-light is "faint and scarce", and the candle "an only one" also points to this. So also does the use of the verb in *Wajadtu hā*<sup>2</sup>. This is corroborated, too, by the fact that this "one and only" candle that could be taken as meaning either the heart<sup>3</sup> or logic and intellect<sup>4</sup>

And because this search for the truth has been a restless human quest from time immemorial, ("Lākin nahā Qadīmatun Ma'rūqatun") it charges only happiness as a fare ("Lahībuhā Dumū")

Consequently, and against the common belief that poetry is a vehicle for happiness, the poet, as a prophet who is only able to see the apocalypse could not help but be candid with mankind and "talk sad" (Qalbī ḥazīn. Min ayna ātī bi 'l-kalāmi 'l-fariḥi)

And as this is an account of Ṣalāḥ 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's experience in poetry, "Poetry" and the poetic experience in this collection is the synonym of the Sufi object of search: Truth, the Absolute, the Reality, and any of the other terms used to denote this. It also represents both the ultimate reality and the means through which this reality is discerned.

\* \* \*

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2. It simply means : I have found/ got/ discovered it. It does not necessarily contain any indication of means through which it is realized.

3. In which case the word "Miṭṭafī" will be referring to a body.

4. As "Jaybi Miṭṭafī" could contain volumes of books; thus wisdom.



They were hard and tempestuous these moments °Abdu 'l-  
Ṣabūr's "seeker of truth" is living, in *Dreams...* Starting with  
doubting the very basis of the existence of God and of Divine  
justice, he seemed to be passing through what the Sufis usually  
call "the stage of Doubt, the dark night of the soul"<sup>5</sup>. In the  
poem "A Song For The Winter" nothing was ever right or warm for  
him, not even poetry.

"What I thought was my only remedy  
Turned out to be my poison  
So the winter tells me  
And when poetry shook me, I fell  
For how long was I wounded?  
I can't say.  
But ever since, my head's been bleeding  
I've made a mistake : poetry  
For the sake of poetry, I destroyed what I had built  
Rebelled,  
And was crucified.  
And when I was hanged  
Cold, darkness, and thunder frightened me;  
Uselessly, I called after poetry.  
It was then I realized what I had lost is  
forever gone". (App. 3.2)

He has had high hopes of redemption in its hands when he first  
woke up to its call, but all he gets from it is pain and uncer-  
tainty.

Until he becomes rewarded for all these pains and  
sacrifices with immortality, therefore, as Orphius who turned  
overnight into a myth and whose poetry eventually immortalized  
him:

"During one uneventful evening  
The poet was turned into a myth  
When the mean night-scout murdered him  
.....

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5. K. Semaan, op. cit.



As for both his sweet and bitter words  
It soon turned into a running creek  
That pours onto the earth  
On the sand from which you took a bite  
When you fell down  
On to the bosom of the angry God will it crawl  
Begging Him for forgiveness  
For a bunch of stupid night-scouts  
Who murdered the Lord's only surviving son". (App. 3.3)

Until such a time comes about, he will have only Fate to blame.

The Fate (God) that destined him to a life in "poetry":

"Ah, Almighty God, my torturer  
Thou who weaveth dreams in the eyes  
Thou who soweth certainty and doubts  
Thou who causeth suffering, joy and grief,  
*Thou didst choose for me*  
How often Thou didst hurt me  
Am I not saved yet?  
Or hast Thou forgotten me?"

and built in him a nature different from the human nature and  
contradictory in itself; only to put him ahead of an impossible  
journey, the requirements for which are so totally against this  
nature of his:

"A poet you are  
And the world, only a prose  
... ..  
While the road is a long one  
And singing it's secrets;  
A daring breach of secrecy". (App. 3.4)

And doomed will be any human being who dares question the  
basis of justice in this. For him there will only be  
melancholy. Just as there was for "a poet" who having con-  
travened that "secret of love" by singing "an innocent and green  
tune", was appalled at seeing his Beloved tearing his melody  
into shreds:

"On one summer evening  
A not-too-important poet



Composed some innocent and green tunes  
To share a secret  
With a beloved.  
But to his utter amazement  
The two hands of his beloved  
Tore his strings into shreds  
His melody turned mute  
When it speak  
It admits only melancholy". (App. 3.5)

But then, he realizes, Fate (God) has strange ways of behavior.

Later in Sailing Into Memory, the poet held this Fate to its promise "Thy Lord shall give thee/ And thou shall be satisfied",

"\_ Where?  
What have You given me, O lord of all being?  
Here I am, stumbling between the gates  
Of present and future  
Fall in the gap in between.  
You did extend a generous hand,  
You did once offer me a cup  
My lips were wet with the wine of Paradise  
... ..  
But it was suddenly held back!  
Where are your presents?  
Where is your gold-beaked angel?  
Depressed with both sides shivering,  
I stayed and stayed  
Thought I had been thrown away into oblivion  
But soon was crushed under your weight of light  
I cannot talk about it, my lord  
A secret sealing two hearts;  
So, when you leave before cockcrow,  
Your words leave behind a few echoes in my ears".  
(App. 3.6)



In Dreams... however, he is seen still clinging to a hope -against hopes- that one day, he will find what he is looking for: purity and innocence. At which time he must have earned and deserved it. This remained his only consolation against all that pain, for a long time:

"The suffering of my journey  
Is my salvation  
And death in desert  
My continual rebirth  
If I die I would live-  
For as long as I wish-  
In the light city  
Where light dwells forever  
Where the sun never sets  
Ah! my radiant city  
Are you the illusion of a hopeless dreamer?  
Or are you a reality?  
The reality?". (App. 3.7)

The following account will therefore, concentrate on the crystallization of this experience into the dynamic symbols of this poetry, through the three major themes; and will only indicate the contextual frameworks various poems should be seen through.

(i). Love:

This theme has always been a vision of certain well-formulated symbols relating to key-words and expressions such as: the heart, Cairo, the night, her white body, a rose, a bird, and love; that represent the poet's search for truth. They are the means through which this search is conducted and expressed. In other words, these symbols are the poetic device through which the ultimate object of search is apprehended and symbolized.



The all-important symbol for "intuition and inspiration" as the only possible path for knowledge, belief, and the Truth, has been pursued since *I Say Unto You*, when the search ended at the door-steps of *The heart* ("One morning/ I saw the reality of the world/ I saw God in my heart".<sup>6</sup>)

In this collection, the cold wind of the winter of doubt that we had seen sweep the poet off his feet previously, affects "the heart" too. As a result, no inspiration was seen coming forth as it turned cold. In the extreme pessimism that followed this revelation in "A song For The Winter", ("each cold night increases its remoteness inside the stone") it is seen to cling reverently to death, refusing to trade it even with the one way certainty ("the warmth of summer")

Cutting all links with this source of inspiration (the heart), however, amounts to the inability of the poet to love. and as "love" symbolizes the Truth, i.e God,<sup>7</sup> the poet's saying:

"The worst that has happened  
To my dark-eyed days, my lady  
Turned my heart stone-hard  
Deprived me of the joy of love  
I , therefore, am at loss  
Not knowing how to love you  
And will remain so for as long as  
This heart of mine  
Remains in my chest". (App. 3.8)

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6. Sabur, *Aqūlu Lakum*, op. cit.

7. And worshipping Him, in turn.



sets the scale for man-God relationship. The question of Divine justice and predestination has to be settled first, before any unity (or the realization of the God-essence that is in man) becomes lasting, and *wuṣūl* worth the while.

This led him to question the religious basis and definition of worship. Should it be confined to only outward acts like prayer, etc, regardless of whether or not there is conviction? Should it mean any sincere attempt of the human soul at comprehending itself, thus comprehending God?

"Now my friends, I am confused  
And asking you a perplexing question:  
Who -of these two-  
Loved Him the most?  
One who sold his soul cheaply  
For a life of merry  
Or, who built temples  
And erected, in His name, towers; high  
So that his soul may be redeemed  
But was a blind follower?  
And now friends  
Who loved Him more?  
Who loved Himself more?  
Who loved Us more?". (App. 3.9)

\* \* \*

In the Sufi concept of Divine love, there is an aspect called "the Feminine Element" *al-Jawharu 'l-unṭhawī*, that contains what is believed to be the stages of the Divine theophany, *al-Tajalli 'l-Ilāhi*, that is connected to the two precepts of a Subject that is influenced, and an Object that is being influenced.



A Murīd (Sufi deciple) either witnesses the Truth (i.e. achieves unity with it) in the feminine element, in his self<sup>8</sup>, or outside of his self (i.e. abstractly). In the first, unity is in an Affected Object (woman), in the second in an Influencing Subject, while in the third it is unity through a directly Infected Object<sup>9</sup>. It is believed, however, that unity through the Feminine Element is the most complete of these forms, as one is able to witness this truth as both an influencing subject and an influenced object. This is so because, the feminine element is the deciding factor in the first two instances; (as "witness-in-self" is seen in contradiction to the female).

The Feminine symbol of "her white body" in this poetry, however, portrayed the desperate search that combined together, characteristics of both spiritual and sensual love:

"Standing near "her"  
 I touched her  
 I watched her  
 I smelled her  
 The pulse in me then,  
 Was that of a pagan worshipper  
 And the soul  
 That of a paralysed Sufi". (App. 3.10)

"Her white body" remained nameless and abstract, all through the search; ("Her white body speak: are you a voice/ Are you a illuminating greenness?/ Are you a wine?")

8. In which case this "self" will be accounted for, in terms of its contrast to the element.

9. <sup>8</sup>Ā. J. Nasr, *al-Ramzu 'l-Shierī cinda 'l-Sūfiyya* (Beirut, 1983), p. 139, 156.



So transparent, pure and innocent ("Twin of angel's thought"), her white body became the epitome of Divine Beauty. And as incomprehensible as this feminine element is, the poet kept wondering as to its true nature. It was at once a voice with which he argued, a greenness within which's garden he had often wandered, and a wine from the brims of which he had, too often, had satisfaction.

\* \* \*

Cairo, also turns into the poet's beloved as it became fused into a fertile area of connotation, that made it at once, the Cairo of Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, the Medina (and Mecca, sometimes) of the prophet, and the enchanting Sufi "abode of perfection". But it might require up to three readings of the poem "A Song For Cairo", for the beauty of the three-dimensional imagery to be noticed. Each reading should, necessarily, confine the meanings of images used to only one area at a time, with the necessary adjustments of elements of these images into the new field of meaning:

"Meeting with you, O my city  
Is my aim, my pilgrimage  
You are my place of retreat  
Meeting with you, O my city  
Fills me with regrets  
Seeing your lighted streets  
Through the dark sky of the airport  
Made me realize, O my city  
How tied I am  
... ..  
To...  
Your streets, upon which I wasted  
The best days of my youth  
And how -as it later turned out-  
My fate was tied to meeting with you;  
O my ever expanding wound.



Thirsty soul-ed I, now, am.  
 The suffering you had offered  
 Or destined for my heart  
 Was my fountain of inspiration  
 How, at the end of time  
 I am bound to dissolve into you  
 How my remenants will eventually  
 Be contained  
 In the Nile and the islands therewith  
 Into the sand of your wards and alleys  
 Until such a time when  
 My sycamore-carved casket will gather  
 Whatever is left of me". (App. 3.11)

\* \* \*

The night, too, far from being the romantic night, is one  
 for lovers, Seekers of Truth:

"Night is our source of intoxication  
 And our wine-glass  
 Our words that contains  
 Our haulage and our sustenance  
 May God not deprive me of Night;  
 Nor its bitterness  
 And if I were to be given the choice  
 I will prefer to die in the Night  
 With my fingers in-between  
 Her curly and heavily-scented hair  
 ... ..  
 Night is our garb and our abode  
 Our rank, our badge  
 Which sets us distinguishable  
 "Only those who lost their days  
 Will be able to appreciated Night";  
 This is our motto  
 Never lament our condition, elated reader  
 We are very proud  
 Of our defeatism". (App. 3.12)

\* \* \*

Never the less, love loses its sparks when it is seen a part  
 of the mysterious plans of Fate and destiny. Unlike the  
 erstwhile love that is predictable, "modern love", "lives only  
 through moments of pain or satisfaction". ("al-Ḥubbu fī Hādha  
 'l-Zamān") Just as the modern human "wax works" we are, knowing



fully well, that this Fate/Destiny is more supreme over our dreams and aspirations than we are, we "nonetheless" make wishes and weave dreams, in total disregard of this fate, which, in the first place, implanted in us this ability [or necessity]. Yet still, who is there to blame for all of it but the Fate?

"If we finally part, O my beloved  
Let us throw all the blame  
On our time  
... ..  
Let us wipe the shadows  
Off our eyes  
Let us smile  
And most certainly believe  
That what occurred to us  
Was a work of Fate  
Executed upon a Supreme order". (App. 3.13)

In the meanwhile, mankind could but seek consolation in "forcing" themselves to believe, in appearing to choose their own fates, that they are only answering *their* feelings:

"Let us most certainly believe  
That we are only responding  
To that which we are feeling  
When we destroyed our love". (App. 3.14)

Better still, they could save themselves the heart-ache, and just look at everything of the world; the helpless search for certainty, acquiring knowledge of reality or the truth, life, death, etc, etc, as one big funny joke. A theme "Memoirs of King ʿAjīb bn Khaṣīb"<sup>10</sup> amply elaborated. Ignore it, therefore, by indulging in pleasures of the world, in physical pleasures, intoxication, and hashish. The traditional Sufi means of escaping the world.

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10. ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *Aḥlāmu 'l-Fāris*..., op. cit., p.53-59.



However, this should by no means be considered a part of what other writers identify in this poetry as "Ma'arrian pessimism". It is more like the meaning of Ibn 'Arabī's phrase "they journeyed continuously"; which Schimmel explains in the following,

"since the object sought is infinite the return from it is also a journey towards it. There is no migration except from one Divine Name to another".<sup>11</sup>

This is the ultimate end (or continuation) of experiences of this nature, and what Shukry 'Ayyād termed "the non-sense literature of the Absurd," (Lā adriyyatu 'l-cabath) is the central theme in the subsequent works of Ṣalāḥ 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr, especially in Ta'ammulāt fī 'l-Zamāni 'l-Jarīh (Meditation In A Wounded Time). "Memoirs of King 'Ajīb", he pointed out, does not fit into the general set up of this collection. It's place is therefore this subsequent collection, together with its poems of similar concern.<sup>12</sup>

But one may disagree with this writer on the reason he gives of this to be the case, being that this poem together with another one that make up the "book" of Poems of Neglected Memoirs (Ṣahā'if min Muḥakkirāt Muḥmalā) are "more of a hindrance" to the "wonderful end-note of the poet's masterpiece" -i.e the point at which the poem "More Precious Than The Eyes"

11. A.Schimmel, op. cit., p. 40

12. 'Ayyād, "Ṣ. 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr wa Aṣwātu 'l-Asr", Fuṣūl ii:1, (Oct. 1981), p. 27.



(Aghlā Minā 'l-ʿUyūn) ends-, than anything else. "How marvelous and refreshing it would have been, was this to be the end of the collection (*Dreams of The Ancient Knight*)"<sup>13</sup> But the nature of concern in this study sees this structural distribution of poems into "books" differently, as will be discussed shortly.

(ii). Predestination:

Apart from what we have seen of the poet's acute consciousness of Fate and destiny at almost every 'corner' of his experience, there is this device he had created and perfected, that showed even in more clear terms the dominance of this theme in his poetry. As a poet whose life is "in poetry", ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr believes in the powers of the word. Through the lexical and functional meanings of the words "if" (law) and "but" (lākin), and the special contexts he had put them in, he summarized man's helplessness towards destiny:

"If only we  
If only,  
If only we, and O the cruelty of 'if only'  
O my enchantress, if we prefaced our words with wishes  
But we  
O the cruelty of 'but we'  
For it proclaims in its intricate twisting letters  
That we reject the traces time has left upon our souls  
We wish we could remove them  
We wish we could forget them  
We wish we could return them to the womb of life".  
(App. 3.15)

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13. Ibid.



But despite this, there is a new development on his previous attitude of always blaming Destiny for man's sad condition. He turns, through the Sufi mask of Bishr, to explain man's share of this blame:

"When we ceased to submit  
Our wills to the will of God  
It refused to rain  
Trees did not blossom  
Fruits did not shine

....

When we lost the peace of reclining  
On the wide bed of content  
A wicked devil of hatred  
Embraced me and shared my bed

....

When we lost the essence of certainty  
The foetus was deformed in the women's womb  
Hair grew out of the eyes  
The chin was tied to forehead:  
A generation of devils". (App. 3.16)

Indeed, man is to be blamed for disobedience to the divine command (fate)

The poet eventually realizes that there are always limits to ordinary human understanding, and human attitude towards reality is either of the following two. There are those who strive for Knowledge but becomes too dazzled and confused, at the time of its revelation, to comprehend anything; and another that remain too "human" to even undertake a search:

"Our eyes...  
are too heavy to see...  
And if they see, what can the blind see?  
Our feet...  
are too heavy to walk...  
And if they walk they are trammed up and we  
fell like clowns". (App. 3.17)



Ultimately, man will have no place to run to, away from fate/destiny (i.e God) than to God (i.e The All-powerful All-willing), and crying out to God is the poet's remaining link with sanity, for he is insistent on one wish: happiness.

"The heart will remain torn apart by certain truth  
No thought will ever sail on its waters even if seas of  
speech were to dry up  
Not even one mariner will ever envision its direction:  
(This truth is) that what we have is always not what we  
want  
And what we always want, we do not find". (App. 3.18)

In more than an instance in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*, therefore, he cries out to God "O our Great Lord O my torturer", "Our Great Lord/ ... Thou hast chosen for me" (A Song To God), and "God, Thou art Supreme/ Thou hast afflicted us with this suffering/ This pain" (Memoirs of The Sufi Bishr).

### (iii). Despair:

This theme grew out of the gruesome nature of the vision in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*, of an unluckily faithless human being and of a plagued universe.

Unlike any other sadness man has ever undergone, this despair is the "melancholy of meditation"<sup>14</sup> on Fate, Justice, Truth, Love, and Death. Going far beyond the sadness that develops out of the erstwhile separation from the divine essence,

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14. M. M. Badawi, op. cit., p. 216.



or out of helplessness and deprivation, and beyond the pains borne from "memories", the poet's is an awful looking rootless despair. "My sadness... this evening is":

- heavy and crushing like the torture of fettered ones in hell
- has strange parents
- a child of an unexpected moment
- born by no womb in travail
- I see it suddenly extending in the middle of my laugh perfectly formed, fully shaped
- as if it woke up under the debris after a slumber of ages.

It is nothing short of a monster with the presence of which the world will never ever be happy again. One needs the help of the All-powerful God to fight such a thing. Hence, the poet becomes more determined than ever, and raises his complaint to God; he is determined too, on being happy again:

"This sadness is a strange, lonely, vague monster  
Tell it O Lord, to leave the house  
Because I want to live in daylight". (App. 3.19)



### 3. MYSTICAL DIMENSION: Vision

There is an ultimate ground upon which the experience in *Dreams of The Ancient knight* eventually lands, and in which also the two-dimensional influence of mysticism shows so clearly.

In three poems categorized by the poet under one of the four "exercise" books (kurrāsāt) he had grouped in poems of this collection, the third book entitled "From The Songs of Plight" (Min Aghāni 'l-Khurūj), -which incidentally form the only three poems of this book- namely "Exodus" (al-Khurūj), "More Precious Than The Eyes" (Aghlā Mina 'l-ʿUyūn), and "Dreams of The Ancient Knight" (Ahlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qadīm); there is an account of an experience into what critics refer to as, the "I" of the poet, in three different roles: in prophet/poet, Sufi/poet, and poet/poet masks, respectively. In the service of these, however, is a whole range of similar, yet different elements of vision (imagery) and language (with a carefully selected vocabulary). They are similar yet different because they were put in such a well-knit shape that, while one could directly refer them back to their respective sources in both the Sīra of the Prophet, concepts of Unity and Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism, and to the poetic experience, yet one is never actually allowed to read in them anymore than an insightful piece of poetry that uses exceptional language and imagery, to tap a poet's very illusive vision of reality.



It is an account of a journey across a rugged and hard terrain to a tightly-locked door that only opens to a passcode, but beyond which lies the grand aim of this journey.

In the first poem, this journey is symbolized by the well-charged Arabic term "al-Khurūj", as one reads the title given to the "book" "Min Aghāni 'l-Khurūj"; the use of which evokes all of the history of political and ideological opposition in Arabic culture and tradition, in which Kharijites, together with Shi'ites and Sufis, played a significant role. Especially in the expression of this opposition to the mainstream Sunnism of the middle ages, from which sprang a whole area of rich symbolism<sup>1</sup>. But after reading the first few sentences in the poem "Exodus", one finds out that "al-Khurūj" here simply means Hijra, and is only used to symbolize the prophet's plight one night, when he secretly left Mecca and headed for Medina (then Yathrib) with the help of no guide, across a desert. Aspects of this incident are then carefully selected and inter-posed: the chosen companion for this adventurous journey (Abūbakr), the cousin the prophet left as his cover-up (ʿAlī bn Abī Ṭālib) Surāqa bn Mālik who, having received news of the prophet's whereabouts, wanted to win the prize put up by Quraish for finding Muhammad, and who went after him only to witness a most horrible nightmare of his life: the hooves of his horse miraculously

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1. K. Abu Deeb, "The Perplexity of The All-Knowing", Critical Introduction to Arabic Literature, I. Boullata ed., Three Continent Press, (Washington, 1980), p. 305.



sank into ground; and the shadow that the phrase "Madīnatu 'l-Ṣaḥw" leaves, of the earlier meeting of the prophet with the people of Yathrib, when they were "re-awakened" by his call, and when they offered him shelter, (Bay'atu 'l-aqaba) for which this journey was embarked upon.

Yet also it is the poet's plight away from his "former self":

- "No companion did I choose  
To cover me. All I want is to stifle this heavy soul"
- "No companion did I leave in my bed to deceive my pursuers  
For nobody pursues me but my past"
- "Ah legs of remorse sink into sand  
And follow me not into exile  
I exhort you in the name of hell:  
The suffering of the journey is my salvation". (App. 4.1)

It is nonetheless, a journey through a tough territory of which the desert across which the prophet passed to Medina, was also used to depict its impossible nature, and the sacrifices it required:

- "I trust no guide  
Even if the desert with its vague sandy hills  
Deludes my eyes".
- "And you desert, petrify your hidden heart  
Let my weary journey  
Make me forget the suffering I have already cast out  
Till my sick body becomes transparent". (App. 4.2)

For such a journey, therefore, one has to -of necessity- have something to support him, push him on, and keep him moving, in the form of a lofty reward that will be awaiting him at the other side. The poet had to also offer sacrifices of suffering and pain, in order that his physical body become wasted and he wins immortality<sup>2</sup>



"The suffering of my journey is my salvation  
And death in the desert, my *continual rebirth*  
If I die I would live as long as I wish in the light city".  
(App. 4.3)

Another thing that this use of symbols from the hijra of the prophet to depict this journey (plight) adds, is the impatience of waiting for the moment when that ultimate aim will be realized. This impatience is similar to the Sufi *wajd*. And Medina itself becomes *the* the truth:

"If I die I would live as long as I wish in the radiant  
city  
Where light dwells forever,  
Where the sun never sets,  
Ah, my radiant city  
Are you the illusions of a hopeless dreamer?  
Or are you reality?  
The reality?".(App. 4.4)

\* \* \*

"More Precious Than the Eyes" takes from the eyes of the Beloved a symbol for inspiration, in a Sufi journey to unity with Truth. Love is the means through which the poet in this "tajallī" hopes to achieve this. It is also his aim:

"Your eyes are my last resting place  
In which I lay  
Not ever wanting to fly  
... ..  
And when my frivolous heart  
Finally landed upon them  
It dawned on me then  
That I had actually reached  
My final destination

Know, O my beloved  
In love lies our peaceful paradise  
... ..

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2. Re-birth through death, which as we had seen previously, Sabur pointed to as a discovery of the prophet [see chapter 3,i]



When our journey ends at the banks of death  
And days burried our bodies  
Into it's horizon will we dissolve  
Glorifying it, with a smile on our faces  
As if we are a melody". (App. 4.5)

It is, however, the nature of this Beloved that draws attention to the poet's hope for rebirth, as he dissolves into "her" light. He is a poor wayfarer in search of love and happiness, in a deserted wilderness;

"Then suddenly...  
There appeared to him a sign of good tiding  
A flag made of light  
A hand of light". (App. 4.6)

And through this "generosity" of the Beloved, he *becomes*.

Thus, for the first time since he has had his first encounter with the monster-despair, he finds the "peace of reclining", through his Sufi/poet mask:

"I then leaned towards your generous shadow  
O, my beloved  
To inhale the flower-smell  
That's in your gardens  
To wet my heart with dew  
And refresh it with the shade and the breezes.  
Your soft love will then  
Wash me up  
As the sky may bath in clouds.  
And as a tree may be moved by spring.  
My dry leaves will fall off  
My barren despair will die off  
My face -made more lively by your smile-  
Will then hag life.  
And towards the sun will I extend my hands  
And to stars will I raise my gaze". (App. 4.7)

Also for the first time, we find him singing songs that are full of happiness and even seeing the world "a beautiful" place.



It was this happy and unusual tone that made ʿAyyād to wish that the poet had stopped right here, and the cycle of his experience that started with asking questions at the beginning of the collection, would have ended with finding his answers. But there is no way the poet could have stopped at the threshold of only one "tajallī" in his experience (and there are at least three sides to it, through the three masks). His realization of Unity through the Sufi way could -and may, in fact, be said to have- provided him with the "peace of reclining" he is so determinedly searching for. But as it is, he believes there is another side to the matter; he is a prophet and a poet with a feeling of responsibility towards his people (mankind), to which this fulfillment of desire in the Sufi way does not address.<sup>3</sup> This is also, in my opinion, what he meant to indicate by the sentence that introduces these three poems "Baynanā, yā jārātī, baḥrun ʿamīq"<sup>4</sup> (Between us stands a gap as deep as the sea, O my neighbor).

\* \* \*

The third poem from which this collection got its title, is the poet's search, in his capacity as a poet using poetics, images and language that, strictly speaking, belong to the realm of poetry. Through which he hoped to reach to the object of search (the aim of the journey in "Exodus", and the truth in

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3. At least no indication of it is made in this poem.

4. ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *Aḥlām*..., op. cit., p. 39.



"Aghlā Mina 'l-cuyūn"), which is in this , Poetry. He searched for a poetry that will fulfill all of the roles he sees for a poet, whose personal salvation or apprehension of the means for this salvation, is not an issue; only the guidance of mankind towards salvation.

His journey in "Dreams of The Ancient Knight", therefore, is a journey to poetry, through the wilderness of imagination and creativity (two branches of a tree, twin waves, two neighboring stars, and two wings of a seagull). And because the ultimate end of this journey, is far from the achievement of "communal" salvation, the poet, having gone through what looks like a purgatory in the first two manifestations (two branches of a tree, and twin waves) is eventually seen to come out pure and complete, enough to assume this responsibility.

That the first two manifestations were a purification stage, however, could be seen in the amount of concern with purity and purification that is given, in many of the images of the first two passages:

- The sun will nourish our roots together
  - Together, dawn will water us with dew
  - Then we will be tinted with blossoming vendure
  - In the spring we don many-hued garments
  - In the autumn we cast them off, baring our bodies
  - And we bath in the winter
  - Pure of sand and shell
  - Crowned with an ingot of light and foam
  - A gentle cloud imbibes us
  - And melts in the breath of a sweet and tender sun.
- (App. 4.8)



In the other two manifestations that followed (two neighboring stars, Two wings of a seagull) he assumes this responsibility:

- "If only we were two neighboring stars  
 ...  
 Shedding light on solitary lovers and wayfarers  
 To the lands of love and passion

- "If only we were the wings of a gentle, tender seagull  
 Hovering over the ship's wake  
 Giving the sailor tidings of arrival  
 Awakening desire for loved ones and for home  
 ...  
 Then the gull sleeps  
 In company with the sailors stricken by homesickness  
 They see his fear and confusion  
 From the singing and the poetry". (App. 4.9)

This, and two other instances<sup>5</sup>, showed clearly the purpose of embarking on this journey, and the grand aim of this experience: a life of purity and innocence through poetry.

Taking even a random sample of this theme in ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr's poetry, most especially in *Dreams of The Ancient Knight*, is enough to prove this point. The following examples will even be confined to the words that have a direct bearing to purity in only one poem:

Ṣuffiyatā/ Nuḍīʿu/ Durratan/ Ṣafāʿinā/ al-Mafraqi  
 ʿl-ṭahūr/ al-Nasīm/ Caraqi ʿl-ghuyūm/ ʿAwaddu  
 law ʿuḍīyʿ/ ʿIn ḍahiktu ṣāfiyan/ Wajhuhu ʿl-  
 waḍīʿ/  
 al-Ḍahkatu ʿl-barīʿah/ al-Dametu ʿl-barīʿah/  
 Ṣāfiyatan ʿarāki/ Law lam yuʿidnī ḥubbuki

5. "A Song to God":

"O God, grant me purity [serenity]", and

"Memoirs of King ʿAjīb":

"A handful of purity [serenity]".



'l-raqīqi li 'l-ṭahāra.

It is also because this "innocence" is what he is searching for in love (and elsewhere) that he constantly envision his Self separate from his object of search, which he eventually had to put blatantly, in the last passage:

"When we met my love  
I knew we will part  
And I will remain standing in a void  
Would that your tender love could not  
Return me to chastity  
To know love like the two branches of a tree  
Like two neighbouring stars  
Like twin waves  
Like the wings of a gentle sea-gull  
Then we would not part  
A road brings us together  
A road brings us together". (App. 4.10)

The "law" here, in contrast to its connotation in the previous passages, is the vehicle through which what sounds like an ultimatum is conveyed. In which case the sentence should mean; not "would that your tender love *had* not returned me to chastity", as is first understood, but "would that your tender love *could* not return me to chastity".

This is corroborated by the adverb "cInda idhin" used in the sentence that followed. The poet seemed to be saying in it something close to "*then and only then* would we not part. and *then* (and only then) will a road bring us together again".

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Could cAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr have been showing how his "spiritual experience" and journey in search of certainty and truth (as are contained all, in the major symbol of Purity) through the mysti-



cal way, far from providing him with answers to his chronic questions about fate and divine justice, he found out, was not the suitable solution to the spiritual poverty of the modern man, and those human ideals?!

At any rate, this study prefers to read that opening sentence of the poems in this "book", that followed the very misleading "dedication" of these poems "to S.GH.", the neighbor between whom and the poet "stands a deep sea", read it as referring to the mystical experience, the major characteristics of which 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr had, on every other occasion,<sup>6</sup> shown to be similar to the poetic experience.

This besides his choice of the phrase "Sawfa aẓallu" (I will remain) in the context seen previously,

"Sawfa aẓallu wāqifan bi lā makān  
Law lam yu'idnī ḥubbuki 'l-raḳīqi li 'l-tahāra".

This was also, in my opinion, the reason behind his assertion that he is now "at peace with God" in *My Life In Poetry* where he said:

"In providing us a chance of life in this world, God is not aiming at punishing us. It was an innocent world the one He handed over to us, an eyeless being solely put under our mercy. But instead of turning it into a peaceful garden filled with justice and love, we polluted it with poverty, slavery, and injustice. There is therefore, nothing left for us on the table of life but what we deserved: carrion.... I have had peace now with God, whole-heartedly believing

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6. See for instance his *My Life In Poetry*, op. cit., vol iii, ch. 1; and "Tajribatī fī 'l-Shar", op. cit, p. 5.



that all human experiences, however insignificant, are a positive step towards unity. i.e towards God."<sup>7</sup>

In other words, unity does not lie, in his opinion, in what could be termed negative spirituality. It lies across both purifying the world, and building out of it an abode where innocence, justice and love rules high. Or so should his persistent search at least be construed, "an attempt at creating in harmony, a complementing whole, that is to eventually be man's certificate of credibility for the life he had lived on earth".<sup>8</sup> Just as the end of Sufism<sup>9</sup> is

"the attainment of ... (that) state of purity and wholeness not through negation of intelligence as is often the case in the kind of piety fostered by certain modern religious movements, but through the integration of each element of one's being into its own proper center".

This is what gave this poem its significance in the collection *Dreams of The Ancient*, and what eventually gives the collection its significance in the poetry of Ṣalāh ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr.

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7. Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fi 'l-Shi'r*, Op. cit., p. 158, 159.

8. Ibid, p. 159.

9. As is drawn by S. H. Nasr, op. cit., p. 44.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TREND IN SUBSEQUENT WORKS

In the very same year *Dreams of The Ancient Knight* was published in Beirut, (1964), Cairo witnessed the publication of a poetic-drama by the same author (ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr), entitled *Ma'sātu 'l-Hallāj* (The Tragedy of al-Hallaj). Central to it was the mytho-historical personality of the Sufi Abū Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj who, ever since that time, came to acquire a great deal of significance in modern Arabic literature through various aspects of his history; his crucifixion that proved to the modern poet the inevitability of incurring pain in the course of gaining salvation; his theories of metamorphosis or "al-Huwa Huw" (The He that is Him) , and of the existence of hidden "Abdāl" (poles) that will always represent revelation in the world. These besides what Louis Massignon came to prove "that it was not so much his famous sentence "ana 'l-Ḥaqq" (I am The Absolute Truth) which brought about his execution, but rather some of his religious theories".<sup>1</sup>

Yet, even in later Sufi literature "Hallaj is celebrated as the great lover, and the one who, without fear, divulged the secrets of the unity of man and God", for which he had to pay

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1. Quoting from Schimmel, op. cit., p. 30.



with his life. Indeed, al-Ḥallāj was "the first to discover that the mystery of creation lies in the dynamic love which is the very essence of God".<sup>2</sup>

These were the aspects his *Tragedy*. . enlisted in building a symbol of a Hallaj that represents ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's idea of how "positive spirituality" should be. One that thinks of a communal and not individual salvation<sup>3</sup> ; and the integration of the "plural" (mankind, nature, etc) into a single whole. (Unity into Godhead)

However, the stage that followed this was one that writers say to be a stage when ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr turned to some form of Absurd Literature in *Meditation In A Wounded Time* (1970) in which he nonchalantly write, of "changing the universe": the physical shape of the human being and his environment; in poems such as "Tale of The Sad Minstrel" (Ḥikāyatu 'l-Mughannī 'l-Ḥazīn), "Conversation at a Cafe" (Ḥadīthun fī Maqhā), and "Fragments of a Common Sad Tale" (Rasā'il Mina 'l-Mādī), in what looks like the nonchalance that is in fact a deep concern, which characterizes such experiences of the human soul vis-a-vis existence.

The search resumed, in *Night Tree* (1972) through "The Search of a Rose Amidst Frost" (al-Baḥṭh ʿan Wardat 'l-Ṣaqīʿ), therefore, continued in the same wise:

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2. L. Massignon, "Interférences philosophique et parées métaphysique dans la mystique hallajienne: notion de l'essentiel désir", *Melanges J. Maréchal*, vol. ii, (Paris, 1955), p. 263.

3. See Ṣabūr, *Ma'sātu 'l-Ḥallāj*, in *al-Aḥmālū 'l-Kāmil* vol iii, p. 401, 460, for instance.



"(O you, this ship  
 With a non-existent, loose throng  
 You rose-of-the-frost  
 You this well-guided ship  
 That is running after time  
 That whirling and swirling time)  
 I bitterly waited and waited  
 Until I could wait no more  
 To dizziness and intoxication  
 I drank a glass of wine  
 As if I were kissing tear-drops  
 Drop by drop  
 As if taking joy  
 In my despondency and my breakdown.  
 Suddenly, I became certain  
 That our meeting,  
 But for a flashing flicker of an eye,  
 Is an impossibility". (App. 5.1)

totally giving in to pessimism in a moment of bleak hopelessness that continues through "A Mixture of Tunes" (Tanwī'āt), "Extractions" (Fuṣūlun Muntaza'ah), and "Coincidences" (Tawāfuqāt), to the collection *Sailing Into Memory* (1979).

But inasmuch as *Sailing Into Memory* is a similar trend, there is a turning point in 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's outlook to life. Having reached a conclusion about the nature of the relationship between God, man, and existence, he appeared there, ready to sit back and recount the fruits his experience had borne him. His journey in *Sailing Into Memory* therefore, is one full of "ricocheting visions" internally controlled by al-Ḥallāj, Sindbad, Shiblī, and Junayd<sup>4</sup> to a land of hidden promises. For this journey however, he decorated himself with the tattered Sufi garb<sup>5</sup>, the for-the-occasion dress he needed in playing his

4. A. K. Zakī, "al-Tafsīru 'l-Uṣṭūrī li 'l-Shī'ri 'l-Ḥadīth", *Fuṣūl* i:4, (1981) p. 102.



grand prophetic role; in poems such as "Verse and Ashes" (al-Shi'r wa 'l-Ramād), "Dialogue" (Ḥiwāriyya), "Death-in-Between" (al-Mawtu Baynahumā), "Sailing Into Memory" (al-Ibḥār fī 'l-Dhākira), "Abstractions" (Tajrīdāt), and "On Repetition" (Takrāriyya);

"Do not sail against fate,  
Of your own free will  
Fall into repetition". (App. 5.2)

Thus, having "sensed danger", 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr kept on sending signs of warnings; ("shouting aloud" in his words), which to his opinion is the role of a poet in life. This he is so fond of comparing with a ship that is about to sink, in which he defines this role in contrast to "rats" that also possess the poet's ability to sense danger, but which, in distinction, jumps into the sea, in its attempt at saving itself, from the sinking ship. Hence his determination on either saving this ship or sinking with it.

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5. Zaki indicates that the use of "a tattered Sufi garb" in "Sailing Into Memory" adds up to the poet's previous discoveries a communal dimension where the Sufi concept of "Fana'", total annihilation into the Truth, as was personally realized by Sabur in previous works, is now about to be at a communal level. See *ibid.*



## CONCLUSION

At this stage, one could talk with a great deal of confidence of, at least, one aspect of Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's "experience", that is seen clearly in Dreams of The Ancient Knight, and that which this study showed to be the influence of the mystical phenomena. It is the evident spirituality,<sup>1</sup> that he, doubtlessly, acquired from Muslim mystics which, together with certain Eliotic and Nietzschean influences,<sup>2</sup> were the poet's prime attraction since childhood.

But as much as this spirituality (and the other influences for that matter) are seen to be lasting in the sense that it was a result of the poet's conviction of its validity and significance as an option -and to a large extent a solution- to that perennial human quest for Reality and its lasting values of justice, truthfulness, etc; as much as this is the case, it is seen to have disappointed our poet in its failure to offer what ʿAyyād says to be "an outlet for the Arab intellectual", or a lasting solution.

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1. Spirituality is used here (as elsewhere) in an apparent avoidance of the term Mysticism or Sufism, because of the historical, sectarian, and other shades of meaning these two terms always bear. Ṣabūr's spirituality, therefore, is not a Mysticism or a Sufism in this sense.

2. See for instance, M. S. Farīd, "Athar T. S. Eliot fī 'l-Adabī 'l-Arabī 'l-Ḥadīth", Fuṣūl, iv (July, 1981); K. Semaan, "T.S. Eliot's influence on Arabic Poetry and Theatre", Comparative Literature Studies, 6 (1969), p. 472-489; and M. al-Nuwayhi, Qaḍiyatu 'l-Shicri 'l-Jadīd, p. 146-168.



Nonetheless, this spirituality have facilitated the way for a solution of a different nature, that ʿAbdu ʿl-Ṣabūr eventually identified as his way of salvation, and his redeemer: i.e. Poetry. It was no mere coincidence, therefore, -as ʿAyyād pointed out again- that his literary autobiographical account should bear such a title as *My Life In Poetry*. As it was no coincidence that the first issue he addresses to be, the many similarities between Poetry and Mysticism.

As a result of this, he developed a whole set of concepts and vocabularies that, if nothing else, show his absolute and unqualified "submission" to Poetry. Hence his account of "the tribe of poets" (Qabīlatu ʿl-Shuʿarāʾ) in contradistinction to men of politics and religion, the "Giants" (Qabīlatu ʿl-Amāliqa); and of his extreme sorrow in eulogizing poets, and how he had wept for the death of ʿAlī Maḥmūd Ṭaha, Ibrāhīm Nāji, and Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb.<sup>3</sup>

Being a poet according to this analogy, therefore, is tantamount to being helpless against other institutional forces (of evil, mainly) of the world; injustice, dishonesty, etc, etc. Subsequently, this poet can only be consoled by seeing in prophets and saints, the only "original copies" of his sufferings and his "doom".

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3. This was in his preface to the anthology on the poetry of ʿAlī Maḥmūd Ṭaha.



One may even extend this argument further: were these influences (of Mysticism, T.S.Eliot, and of philosophers such as Nietzsche and Sartre) to be considered -as a result- "the permanent (i.e. static) aspects of 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's literary biography"<sup>4</sup>, his constant search for lasting values in Socialism, Existentialism, and in the Absurd could be seen as the dynamic aspects of this creativity. Hence the closely-knit uniformity of form and of content in Dreams of The Ancient Knight, that is seen moving towards the perpetuality and permanence of the mystical phenomena on one hand, and the change and continuity of the human quest for the truth and for the secrets of Existence, on another.

That is why a mystical trend could be seen across 'Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr's literary output as a whole, cutting through the stages of change from one ideology (outlook) to another. In People of My Country, the collection which critics like to see as representing the stage of his inclination to Socialism (or Humanitarian Socialism, as some prefer to call it), this trend is seen especially apparent through two poems; "A Song of Allegiance", and "The Little God". His turn to absolute humanitarianism in I Say Unto You was also emphasized through the mystical vehicle. And these were what the second chapter of this study argued out.

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4. S. 'Ayyād, op. cit., p. 22.



Dreams of The Ancient Knight, however, was a successful merger of the two elements of permanence, and continuity/change in this poetry, when outlook towards truth and existence is -at once- philosophical and spiritual. But the third chapter proceeded in its enquiry into this, to the individual and basic components of this outlook, in the imagery and language of the collection, to give a detailed picture of this interaction of logic and spirituality. It is assumed at the end to be an attempt of defining a particular vision concerning that which the first chapter traced as the transcendental aspects of our poet's "experience of the soul" through poetry, namely, secrets of human existence, the human eternal quest for love and justice, the unceasing journey into the infinite, immortality, and man's bitter struggle to transform the world, change life, and reshape human understanding.

This is, however, assumed to be a negative definition, the result of which was a picture of a defeatist spirituality, that paves the way for an objective assessment of a more worthwhile type. The same could be said of the manifest "existential" tendency, despair, and attitude to fate, in the collection.

Furthermore, it is assumed that, the poetic-drama The Tragedy of al-Hallāj is a further explication of this outlook, where 'Abdu 'l-Sabur seemed to be painting yet another picture of another type of spirituality that, he made sure, should never appear escapist in nature, as he made sure Bishr The Sufi should



be a pessimist. Worth noting here, too, is his insistence on using a *Sufi* mask, through two different, but rich, literary genres.

His later-stage turn to the Literature of the Absurd, was consequently seen as the most natural course of development in all such experiences, and his account of it, the most "matured" exposition of this outlook, most especially in *Sailing Into Memory*, where the spirituality appeared in a clear contrast to most forms of Mysticism; Islamic, etc, and which, at the long run, culminated into his grand finale, the poem "Death-In-Between" (al-Mawtu Baynahumā), in which a skillful use of some Qur'anic verses, put within a special context, revealed what could be justifiably called Ṣalāh ʿAbdu 'l-Ṣabūr's "special outlook".



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## Appendix

Unless otherwise indicated, all references to page numbers here are to 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Ahlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qadīm*, 5th impression, Dārū 'l-Shurūq, (Cairo, 1986).

### 1.1

Yā rabbana 'l-ʿAzīma Yā Ilāhana  
Alaysa yakfī annanā mawtā bilā akfān  
Alaysa yakfī annanā mawtā bilā akfān  
Hattā tudhilla zahwanā wa kibriyā'anā

Yā rabbanā 'l-ʿAzīma Yā muʿadhdhibī  
Yā nāsija 'l-Ahlāma fi 'l-ʿUyūn

Ikhtarta liy, la shaddi mā 'awjaʿtanī  
Alam ukhalliṣ baʿdu  
Am turā nasītanī?  
Al-Waylu liy nasītanī  
Nasītanī.  
(p. 18,20)

### 1.2

Yā jismahā 'l-abyaḍi qul: a anta ṣawt?  
Fa qad taḥāwarnā kathīran fi 'l-masā'  
Yā jismahā 'l-abyaḍi qul: a anta khudratun munawwirah?  
Yā kam tajawwaltu kathīran fī ḥadā'iqik  
Yā jismahā 'l-abyaḍi qul: a anta khamrah?  
Faqad nahaltu min ḥawāfi marmarik  
Siqāyatī mina 'l-mudāmi wa 'l-ḥubābi wa 'l-zabad  
Yā jismaha 'l-abyaḍi mithla khātiri 'l-malā'ikah.  
(p. 24).



2.1

Šanaʿtu lak  
 ʿArshan mina 'l-Ḥarīri makhmalīy  
 Najjartuhū min šandali  
 Wa musnadayni tattakī ʿalaihīmā  
 Wa lujjatan mina 'l-Rukhāmi Šakhruhā almās  
 Jalabtu min sūqi 'l-Raqīqi Qaynatayn  
 Qatṭartu min karmi 'l-Jināni jafnatayn  
 Wa 'l-Ka's min billawr  
 Asrajtu miṣbāḥan  
 ʿAllaqtuhū fī kuwwatin fī jānibi 'l-Jidār  
 Wa nūrihi 'l-Mufaḍḍadi 'l-Mahīb  
 Wa Dhilluhu 'l-Gharīb  
 Fī ʿĀlamin yaltaffu fī izārihi 'l-Shahīb  
 Wa 'l-Laylu qad rāḥā  
 Wa mā qadimta anta Zā'irī 'l-Ḥabīb.

\*\*\*

Hadamtu mā banayt  
 Aḍaʿtu mā-Qtanayt  
 Kharajtu lak  
 ʿAlayya an uwāfī maḥmalak  
 Wa mithlamā wulidtu ghayra shamlata 'l-Iḥrāmi qad  
 kharajtu lak  
 Usā'ilu 'l-ruwwād  
 ʿAn ardika 'l-gharībati 'l-rahībati 'l-asrār  
 Fī hud'ati 'l-masā'i wa 'l-ḡalāmu khaymatun sawdā'  
 Darabtu fī 'l-widyāni wa 'l-tilāʿi wa 'l-wihād  
 Usā'ilu 'l-ruwwād  
 "Wa man arāda an yaʿīsha falyamut shahīda ʿishqī"  
 Anā hunā malqī ʿalā 'l-jidār Wa qad dafantu fī  
 'l-khayālī qalbiya 'l-wadīʿ.

\*\*\*



Mu'adhdhibī yā ayyuha 'l-ḥabīb  
 Mu'adhdhibī yā ayyuha 'l-ḥabīb  
 Alaysa liy fī 'l-majlisi 'l-saniyi ḥabwata 'l-  
 tabxīc  
 Fa innanī muṭiyē  
 Wa khādimun samīyē  
 Fa in adhinta innanī 'l-nadīmu fi 'l-ashār  
 Hikāyatī gharā'ibun lam yaḥwihā kītab  
 Tabā'icī raqīqatun ka 'l-khamri fī 'l-akwāb  
 Fa'in latafta, ḥal ilayya ranwata 'l-ḥanān?  
 Fa innanī adallu bi 'l-hawā calā 'l-akhdān  
 Alaysa lī biqalbika 'l-camīqi min makān?  
 Wa qad kassartu fī hawāka tīnata 'l-insān  
 Wa laysa ṭamma min rujūc".<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2

Kāna lī yawman ilāhun. Wa malādhī kāna baytah  
 Qāla lī: inna ṭarīqa 'l-wardi wa'run fa 'rtaqaytuh  
 Wa talafattu warā'i wa warā'i mā wajadtuh  
 Thumma aṣghaytu liṣawti 'l-rīḥi tabkī fa bakaytuh  
 Dhāta yawmin kuntu 'artādu 'l-ṣaḥārī kuntu waḥdī  
 Hīyna abṣartu ilāhi asmaru 'l-jabhata; wardī  
 Wa raqaṣnā wa 'ilāhi li 'l-nadā khaddan li khaddī  
 Thumma nimnā wa ilāhi bayna amwājin wa wardī.

\*\*\*

Wa ilāhi kāna ṭiflan. Wa anā ṭiflan cabadtuh  
 Kullu mā fi 'l-rawḍi yaḥwāhu wa lākinnī 'mtalaktuh  
 Kullamā nagghama fī 'l-aykati cusfūrun, lathamtuh

1. 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, *al-Acmālu 'l-Kāmila*, vol. 1, pp. 101-104.



Wa idhā thārat binā 'l-ashbāhu wa 'l-laylu 'etanaqtuh.

\*\*\*

Wa mashaynā marratan fī 'l-layli wa 'l-wajdu ṭalāsīm  
Fa nashaqnā thawrata 'l-ḥitri wa qabbalnā 'l-kamā'im  
Wa shahidnā fī 'ntiṣāfi 'l-layli mīlāda 'nnasā'im  
Wa rajaʿnā fī thiyābi 'l-fajri nabdū ka 'l-tawā'im.

\*\*\*

Thumma aṣbaḥta ilāhi, tamnaʿu 'l-khaṭwata ʿnnī  
Wa unādika fa aʿyā, wa yasuddu 'l-ṣamta udhunī  
Wa unājika ʿalā 'l-ḥīrati fī zilli 'l-tamannī  
A turā ruḥta ami 'l-wajdu 'l-ladhī dāʿa bi ʿaynī?!".<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3

Ilayya... ilayya

... ..

Li naṭʿama kisratan min ḥikmati 'l-ajyāli maghmūsa<sup>1</sup>  
Bi ṭayshi zamāninā 'l-mimrāḥ  
Li Nuksira thumma nashkura qalbanā 'l-hādī  
Li yursīna ʿalā shaṭṭi 'l-yaqīn".<sup>3</sup>

### 2.4

... fa qad aḍalla 'l-ʿaqlu masrānā

Ilayya... ilayya

Anā ṭawwaftu fī 'l-Awrāqi sawwāḥan shabā qalamī  
Hiṣānī baʿda an ḥamalat biya 'l-awhāmu wa 'l-ghafla  
Sinīna ṭiwāl, fī batni 'l-lajāji wa dhulmati  
'l-mantiq.<sup>4</sup>

2. Ibid, pp. 47-49.

3. Ibid, p. 45.

4. Ibid.



## 2.5

Ra'aytu ḥaqīqata 'l-dunyā  
 Samietu 'l-najma wa 'l-amwāha wa 'l-azhāra mūsīqa  
 Ra'aytu 'l-Lāha fī Qalbī  
 Li'annī ḥīnamā 'stayqaztu dhāta ṣabāḥ  
 Ramaytu 'l-kutba li 'l-nīrāni thumma fataḥtu shub-  
 bākī  
 Wa fīnafasi 'l-duḥā 'l-fawwāḥ  
 Kharajtu li anḡura 'l-māshīna fi 'l-turuqāt wa 'l-  
 sā'īna li 'l-arzāq  
 Wa fī zillī 'l-ḥadā'iqi abṣarat cynāya asrāban mina  
 'l-cushshāq  
 Wa fī laḡza  
 Sha'artu bi jismiya 'l-maḥmūma yanbiḡu mithla qalbi  
 'l-shams  
 Sha'artu bi anna nī 'mtala'at shicābu 'l-qalbi bi  
 'l-ḡikma  
 Sha'artu bi annanī aṣbaḥtu qiddīsan  
 Wa anna risālatī hiya an uqaddisakum".<sup>5</sup>

## 2.6

Qad kuntu fī mā fāta min ayyām  
 Yā fitnatī, muḡāriban ṣalban wa fārisan humām  
 ... ..  
 Kuntu acīshu fī rabīcin khālidin, ayya rabīc  
 Wa kuntu in bakaytu hazzanī 'l-bukā  
 Wa kuntu cindamā aḡissu bi 'l-rathā'  
 Li 'l-bu'asā'i 'l-ḡucafā'  
 Awaddu law aṡcamtuhum min qalbiya 'l-wajīc  
 ... ..  
 Wa kuntu in ḡaḡiktu ṣāfiyan ka'annanī ḡhadīr

5. Ibid, pp. 177-178.



Yaftarru ʿan ẓilli 'l-nujūmi wajhuhu 'l-waḍīy'

Mādhā jarā li 'l-fārisi 'l-humām?

Inkhalaa 'l-qalbu wa wallā ḥariban bi lā zimām

Yā man yadullu khutwatī ʿalā ṭarīqi 'l-damʿati 'l-  
barī'ah

Yā man yadullu khutwatī ʿalā ṭarīqi 'l-ḍahḳati 'l-  
barī'ah

... ..

Uṭṭika mā aṭṭatniya 'l-dunyā mina 'l-tajrībi wa 'l-  
mahārā

Liqā'a yawmin wāḥidin mina 'l-bakāra. (p. 48,49)



## 2.7

Li annī hīnamā 'stayqaztu dhāta sabāh  
 Ramaytu 'l-kutuba li 'l-nīranī thumma fatahtu shubbākī  
 Wa fī nafasi 'l-ḡuḡā 'l-fawwāh  
 Kharajtu li anzura 'l-māshīna fi 'l-ṭuruqāti wa 'l-  
 sā'ina li 'l-'arzāq  
 Wa fī zilli 'l-ḡadā'iqi 'abṣarat 'cynāya 'asrāban min  
 'l-cushshāq  
 Wa fī Laḡza!  
 Sha'artu bi jismiya 'l-mahmūmi yanbiḡu mithla qalbi  
 'l-shams  
 Sha'artu bi 'annanī 'mtala'at shicābu 'l-qalbi bi  
 'l-ḡikma".<sup>1</sup>

## 2.8

"Wa nazalnā naḡwa 'l-sūqi 'anā wa 'l-Shaykh  
 Kāna 'l-insānu 'l-'af'ā yajhadu an yaltaffa  
 'alā 'l-insān...  
 ...al-karkī  
 Fa mashā baynahumā 'l-insānu 'l-tha'lab  
 'Ajaban!  
 Zuwru 'l-insānu 'l-karkī fī fakki 'l-insān al-tha'lab  
 Nazala 'l-sūqa 'l-insānu 'l-kalb  
 Kay yafqā'a 'cyna 'l-insāni 'l-tha'lab  
 Wa yadūsa dimāḡha 'l-insāni 'l-'af'ā  
 Wahtazza 'l-sūqu bi khuṭuwāti 'l-insāni 'l-fahd  
 Qad jā'a li yabqara baṭna 'l-insāni 'l-kalb  
 Wa yamussa nukhā'a 'l-insāni 'l-tha'lab  
 Yā Shaykhī Bassāmu 'l-Dīn/ Qul lī: 'ayna 'l-  
 insānu....'l-insān?". (p. 64, 65)

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 1. Ibid.



2.9

Lammā ra'ayna 'l-shamsa fī mafāriqi 'l-ṭarīq  
Maddat dhirā'ayhā 'l-jamīlatayn  
Maddat dhirā'ayhā 'l-mukhīfatayn  
Wa naqqarat 'aṣābi'a 'l-madīnati 'l-mudabbabā  
'Alā zujāji 'ushshinā ka'annāhā tadfa'unā  
... ..  
Nadhabu 'ayn?  
Tashābakat 'akuffanā  
Wa 'etanaqat 'aṣābi'u 'l-yadayn  
... ..  
Tafarraḡat khutwātunā wa 'nkafa'at  
'Alā 'l-salālimu 'l-qadīma  
Thumma nazalnā li 'l-ṭarīqi wājimīn. (p. 24, 25)

2.10

Fī jabhati 'l-ṭarīqi 'nfalatat dhirā'uhā  
Fī niṣfihi tabā'adat- farraḡanā musta'jilun ya shuddu  
ṭiflatah  
Fī 'ākhirī 'l-ṭarīqi tuqtu -māstata'etu- law ra'ayt  
Mā lawnu 'cynayhā  
Wa hīna shārafnā dhurā 'l-maydāni ghamghamat bi dūni  
ṣawtī  
Ka 'annahā tas'alunī: man 'ant?

("Ughniya min Vienna", p. 25).

Wa hīnamā 'ltaḡayna yā ḡabibatī 'ayqantu 'annanā  
Muftariḡān"

("Aḡlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qadīm", p. 49).



2.11

Yā khuddama 'l-qasr... wa yā hurrāsi...wa yā ajnādi...  
 Wa yā dubbāti... wa yā qāda  
 Muddū hawla 'l-kurati 'l-ardīyyati nasja 'l-shabaka  
 Kay yasquta malikukumu 'l-mutadalli. (p. 59)

2.12

Fa anā atakallamu bi 'l-amthāli li anna 'l-alfāza 'l-  
 curyānah  
 Hiya aqṣā min an tulqihā shafatān  
 Lakinna 'l-alfāza 'l-multaffati fi 'l-asmāl  
 Kashafat jasada 'l-wāqic  
 Wabadat ka 'l-ṣidqi 'l-curyān".  
 ("Risāla Ilā Sayyida Tayyiba", p. 31.)

2.13

Wa callama Ādama 'l-asmā'a kullahā  
 ....  
 Qālā: Yā Ādamu anbi'hum bi asmā'ihim.  
 Lā... Lā...  
 La ajru'u yā rabbāh  
 Wa kayfa usammī kulla 'l-'asmā'  
 Hal takrahunī yā rabbī hattā tanfukha fī qaṣabati jismī  
 'l-nāhili  
 Mā ṣunta zamānan min 'asmā'!  
 Iṣrif canni taklīfak  
 ....  
 Fa 'anā mundhu zamān  
 ....  
 Atakhaffā tahta jidāri 'l-tashbīh  
 Aw fī hujri 'l-tawriyati wa shaqqi 'l-iyamā'.<sup>2</sup>



2.14

Yā rabb! Yā rabb  
 Asqaytanī. Ḥattā 'idhā mā mashat  
 Ka'suka fī mawāṭini 'asrārī  
 Alzamtanī 'l-ṣanta wa hādha 'anā  
 Aghuṣṣu makhnūqan bi 'asrārī.<sup>3</sup>

2.15

Ta'āla 'l-Lāhu, anta wahabtana hādha 'l-ʿadhāba  
 Wa hādhihī 'l-Ālām

... ..

Ta'āla 'l-Lāhu, hādha 'l-kawnu mawbū'un wa lā  
 Bur'u

Wa law yunṣifuna 'l-Rahmāna ʿajjāla naḥwanā  
 bi 'l-mawt

... ..

Fa ayna 'l-mawtu, ayna 'l-mawt, ayna  
 'l-Mawt? (p. 63, 64)

2.16

Iḥras 'allā tasmaʿ

Iḥras 'allā tanzur

Iḥras 'allā talmas

Iḥras 'allā tatakallam

Qif!

Wa taʿallaq fī ḥabli 'l-ṣanti 'l-mubram

2. Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr, al-Ibhāru fī 'l-Dhākira, al-Waṭanu 'l-Arābī li  
 'l-Nashr, (1979), p. 56-58.

3. Ibid, p.



Yunbūcu 'l-Qawli camīq  
Lakinna 'l-kaffa qaṣīra  
Min bayni 'l-wuṣṭā wa 'l-sabbābati wa 'l-'ibhām  
Yatasarrabu fī 'l-ramli kalām  
Wa li'annaka lā tadrī ma'na 'l-'alfāz  
Fa 'anta tūnājizunī bi 'l-'alfāz  
al-Lafzu ḥajar  
al-Lafzu maniyya  
Fa idhā rakkabta kalāman fawqa kalām  
Min baynihimā 'stawladta kalām  
La ra'ayta 'l-dunyā mawlūdan bashī'a  
Wa tamannayta 'l-mawt  
Arjūk  
al-Ṣamt..  
al-Ṣamt! (p. 61, 62)



### 3.1

Ma'adhīratan yā ṣuḥbatī, lam tuthmiri 'l-'aṣḥjāru  
 hādha 'l-eām  
 Fa ji'tukum bi 'arda'i 'l-ṭacām  
 Wa lastu bākḥīlan wa 'innamā faqīratun kbazā'inī  
 Muqfīratun ḥuqūlu ḥintatī.

Ma'adhīratan yā ṣuḥbatī, fa 'l-ḍaw'u khāfitun  
 ṣaḥīḥ  
 Wa 'l-ṣḥshameatu 'l-waḥīdatu 'l-latī wajadtuhā fī  
 jaybī miṭṭafī  
 Aṣḥealtuhā lakum  
 Lākinnahā qadīmatun ma'rūqatun, lahībuhā dumḥ.

Ma'adhīratan yā ṣuḥbatī, qalbī ḥazīn  
 Min 'ayna 'atī bi 'l-kalāmi 'l-fariḥī. (p. 5)

### 3.2

Yunbi'unī ṣhitā'u hādha 'l-eāmi..  
 ...anna mā zanantuhū ṣhifāya kāna summī  
 Wa anna hādha 'l-ṣhiera ḥīna hazzanī 'asqaṭanī  
 Wa lastu 'adrī kam mina 'l-sinīni qad juriḥt  
 Lākinnanī min yawmihā yanzifu ra'sī  
 al-Ṣhieru zallatī 'l-latī min 'ajlihā hadamtū mā  
 banayt  
 Min ajlihā kharajt  
 Min 'ajlihā ṣulibt  
 Wa ḥīnamā eulliqtu kāna 'l-bardu wa 'l-zulmatu wa  
 'l-ra'ad  
 Tarujjunī khawfa  
 Wa ḥīnamā nādaytuhū lam yastajib  
 'Araftu 'annanī ḍayya'etu mā 'aḍa'et. (p. 10, 11)



### 3.3

Fī laylati ṣayfin rākīdatin  
 Ṣāra 'l-shāʿiru uṣṭūra  
 Qatalathu 'l-khafrā'u 'l-ḥaqrā'

... ..  
 Ammā 'l-kalimātu 'l-ḥulwati wa 'l-murrā  
 Faqad 'nsābat jadwal  
 Yamdī ḥayṭhu saqatta wa ʿadḍa 'l-turba famak  
 Ḥattā yughfī fī ḥidni 'l-rabbi 'l-ghāḍib  
 Yarjūhu 'an yaʿfuwa ʿan khufarā'in buladā'  
 Qatalu 'ākḥira 'abnā'i 'l-rabb.

(Qaṣīdat "Lorca", p. 34)

### 3.4

Shāʿirun anta wa 'l-kawnu nathr

... ..  
 Wa 'l-ṭarīqu ṭawīl  
 Wa 'l-tagħannī 'jtirā'un ʿalā kashfi sirr.

(Qaṣīdat "Baudelaire", p. 35).

### 3.5

Fī laylati ṣayfin  
 Waqqāʿa 'aḥadu 'l-shuʿarā'u 'l-buṣaṭā'  
 Anghāman sādḥijatan khaḍrā'  
 Li yunājī qalba 'l-'ilf  
 Lākin kaffā maʿshūqatihī qad mazzaqatā 'awtārah  
 Ṣārat 'angḥām 'l-shāʿiri kharsā'  
 Fa 'idhā naṭaqat kānat sawdāwiyya.  
 (Qaṣīdat "Risāla 'ilā Sayyidatin Ṭayyiba", p.30.)



### 3.6

Ayn?

Ayna ʿaṭā'uka yā rabba 'l-kawn?

... ..

Hā anā dhā ataʿaththaru bayna 'l-babayn

Hā anā dhā asqutu fi 'l-mābayn

Qarrabta fa aʿṭayt

Ḥattā ballalta 'l-shafatayni bi mā'i 'l-tasnīm

... ..

Thumma manaʿt

... ..

Ayna hadāyāka? Fujā'atika ayn?

Ayna malākuka dhū 'l-miqāri 'l-dhahabiy

... ..

Wa ka'īban murtaʿidu 'l-janabayn

Yatūlu mukūthī...

Atakhayyalu ʿinda ʿidhin annī nasyun mansiy

Ḥattā tashaqunī waṭ'atuka 'l-nūrāniyya

La ataḥaddathu ʿanhā yā rabb, ḥiya sirrun maktūmun  
bayna 'l-qalbayn

Fa idhā fāraqta qubayla ṣiyāḥi 'l-dīki, tabaqqat  
min kalimātika

Biḍʿatu asdā'in fi 'l-udhunayn

Wa tabaqqā min nūrika wamdu shūʿain maksūrin fi  
'l-ʿaynayn.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibid.



### 3.7

Inna ʿadhāba riḥlatī ṭahāratī  
 Wa 'l-mawtu fī 'l-ṣaḥrā' i baʿthiya 'l-muqīm  
 Law mittu ʿishtu mā 'aṣḥā'u fī 'l-madīnati 'l-  
 munīrah  
 Madīnātu 'l-ṣaḥwi 'l-ladhī yazkharu bi 'l-'adwā'  
 Wa 'l-ṣhamsu lā tufāriqu 'l-ṣahīra  
 Awwāhu yā madīnati 'l-munīra  
 Hal anti wahmu wāhimin taqattāʿat bihī 'l-subul?  
 Am anti ḥaq?  
 Am anti ḥaq?.

(Qaṣīdat "al-Khurūj", p.40, 41.)

### 3.8

Aṣḥqā mā marra bi 'ayyāmī 'l-jahma  
 Jaʿalathū yā sayyidatī qalban jahman  
 Salabathu mawhibata 'l-ḥubbi  
 Wa anā lā ʿarifū kayfa uḥibbuki  
 Wa bi aḍlāʿi ḥādḥa 'l-qalb.

(Qaṣīdat "Risāla ilā Sayyidatin Ṭayyiba", p. 31.)

### 3.9

Wa 'l-āna yā aṣḥāb  
 As'alukum su'āla ḥā'iri  
 Ayyuhumā aḥabbah?:  
 Man khaṣira 'l-rūḥa fa arkhaṣa 'l-ḥayāh  
 Am man banā lahū maʿābidan  
 Wa ṣhāda bi 'smihī manā'ira  
 Qāmat ʿalā ḥayātin  
 Najat li annahā tanakkarat?



Wa 'l-āna ya aṣḥāb  
Ayyuhumā aḥabbahu  
Ayyuhumā aḥabba nafsah  
Ayyuhumā aḥabbanā?.

(Qaṣīdat "Ḥikāyāh Qadīma", p. 32)

### 3.10

Waqaftu qurbahā aḥussuhā, arqubuhā, aṣḥummuhā  
al-Nabḍu nabḍun wathaniy  
Wa 'l-rūḥu rūḥu ṣūfiyyin salībi 'l-badanī. (p. 23)

### 3.11

Liqāki yā madīnatī ḥajjī wa mabkāya  
Liqāki yā madīnatī asāyā  
Wa ḥīnamā ra'aytu min khilāli zulmati 'l-maṭār  
Nuwraki yā madīnatī caraftu 'annanī ghullilt  
Ilā...  
... 'l-mayādīni 'l-latī tamūtu fī waqdatihā  
khudratu ayyāmi  
Wa anna mā quddira lī, yā jurḥiya 'l-nāmī  
Liqāki...  
... birūḥiya 'l-~~z~~āmī  
Wa an yakūna ma wahabti aw qaddarti li 'l-fu'ādi  
min adhāb  
Yunbū'a ilhāmī  
Wa an adhūba ākhira 'l-zamāni fīyk  
Wa an yaḍumma 'l-Nīla wa 'l-jazā'iru 'l-latī  
tashuqquh  
... ..  
'izāmiya 'l-mufattata  
Calā dharā 'l-ahyā'i wa 'l-sikak



Ḥīna yulimmu shamlahā tābūtiya 'l-manḥūti min jim-  
mīzi Miṣra.

(Qaṣīdat "Ughniyā ilā 'l-Qāhira", p. 12.)

### 3.12

al-Laylu sakrunā wa ka'sunā

Alfaḥunā 'l-latī tudāru fīhi naqlunā wa baqlunā

al-Lāhu la yaḥrimunī 'l-layla wa lā marāratah

Wa in atāni 'l-mawtu...

Fa 'l-amut aṣābici fī sha'rihā 'l-ja'idi 'l-  
ththaqīli 'l-rā'iḥa

... ..

al-Laylu thawbunā khibā'unā

Rutbatunā shāratuna 'l-latī ya'rifunā aṣḥābunā

"La ya'rifu 'l-layla siwā man faqada 'l-nahār"

Hādhā shicārunā

La tubkinā yā ayyuha 'l-mustami'u 'l-sa'īd

Fa nahnu mazhuwwūna bi 'nhizāminā.

(Qaṣīdat "Ughniyā li 'l-Layl", p.14, 16.)

### 3.13

Idhā 'ftaraqnā ya ḥabībatī, fa 'lnulqi kulla 'l-  
lawm

Clā zamāninā

... ..

Wa 'lnamsaḥi 'l-zilāla can cuyūninā

Wa 'lnabtasim fī thiqatin bi anna mā ḥadath

Kāna irādata 'l-qadar

Wa anna āmiran amar.

(Qaṣīdat "al-Ḥubbu fī Hādhā 'l-Zamān", p. 28.)



### 3.14

Wa annanā qadi 'stajabnā li 'l-ladhī naḥissuh  
 Hīna qatalna ḥissanā. (p. 29)

### 3.15

Law annanā  
 Law annanā, wa āhi min qaswati law  
 Lākinnanā...  
 Wa āhi min qaswatiḥā lākinnanā  
 Li annahā taqulū fī ḥurūfiḥā 'l-malfūfati 'l-  
 muṣṭabikah  
 Bi annanā nunkiru mā khallafati 'l-ayyāmu fī  
 nufūsinā  
 Nawaddu law nakhla'uhū  
 Nawaddu law nansāh  
 Nawaddu law nu'īyduhū li raḥimi 'l-ḥayāt.  
 (Qaṣīdat "Aḥlāmu 'l-Fārisi 'l-Qadīm", p. 47.)

### 3.16

Hīna faqadnā 'l-riḍā  
 Bimā yurīdu 'l-qadā  
 Lam tanzili 'l-amṭār  
 Lam tuwriqi 'l-ashjār  
 Lam talma'ī 'l-thimār  
 ... ..  
 Hīna faqadnā hud'ata 'l-janbī  
 'alā firāshi 'l-riḍā 'l-rahbi  
 Nāma 'alā 'l-wasā'id shayṭanu bughḍin fāsīd  
 ... ..  
 Hīna faqadnā jawhara 'l-yaqīn



Tashawwahat ajinnatu 'l-ḥubālā fī 'l-butūn  
 al-Sha'ru yanmū fī maghāwiri 'l-ʿuyūn  
 Wa 'l-Dhaqnu ma'qūdun ʿalā 'l-jabīn  
 Jīlun mina 'l-shayātīn.  
 (Qaṣīdat "Mudhakkirāti 'l-Sūfī Bishr al-Ḥāfī", p.  
 60)

### 3.17

Ahdābunā athqalu min an tarā  
 Fa'in ra'at, fa mā yara 'l-ʿumyān?  
 Aqdāmunā athqalu min an tanqula 'l-khaṭw  
 Wa in khaṭat tashābakat, ṭhumma saqaṭnā huz'atan  
 ka bahlawān.  
 (Qaṣīdat "Ughniya ilā 'l-Lāh", p. 18)

### 3.18

Tazallu ḥaqīqatun fī 'l-qalbi tuwjīʿuhū wa tuḍ-  
 nīyhi  
 Wa law jaffat biḥāru 'l-qawli lam yubḥir bihā  
 Khāṭir  
 Wa lam yanshur shirāʿu 'l-ẓanni fawqa miyāhihā  
 Mallāḥ  
 Wa ḥdhālika anna mā nalqāhu la nabghīh  
 Wa mā nabghīhi lā nalqāh. (p. 63)

### 3.19

Lākinna hādha 'l-ḥuzna miskhun ghāmidun, mus-  
 tawḥishun gharīb  
 Fa qul lahū, yā rabbi, an yufāriqa 'l-diyār  
 Li annanī urīdu an aʿīsha fi 'l-nahār.  
 ("Ughniya ilā 'l-Lāh", p. 19.)



#### 4.1

Lam atakhayyar wāḥidan mina 'l-ṣiḥāb  
Li kay yufaddīnī bi nafsihī, fa kullu mā urīdu  
qatla nafsiya 'l-thaqīla.

Lam ughādir fi 'l-firāshi ṣāḥibī yuḍallilu 'l-  
ṭilāb  
Fa laysa man yaṭlubunī siwā 'anā 'l-qadīm.

Sūkhī idhan fi 'l-ramli sīqanu 'l-nadam  
Lā tatba'īnī naḥwa mahjarī, nashadtuki 'l-  
jaḥīm.

Inna 'adhāba riḥlatī ṭahāratī. (p. 40)

#### 4.2

La āmanu 'l-dalīla ḥattā law taḥābāhat 'alayya  
ṭal'atu 'l-ṣaḥrā'  
Wa zahruhā 'l-katūm

Taḥajjarī ka qalbiki 'l-khabī'i, yā ṣaḥrā', wa  
'ltunsinī 'ālāma riḥlatik  
Tidhkāra ma 'tṭaraḥtu min ālām  
Ḥattā yashiffa jismiya 'l-saqīm. (p. 39, 40)

#### 4.3

Inna 'adhāba riḥlatī ṭahāratī  
Wa 'l-mawtu fī 'l-ṣaḥrā'i, ba'ṭhiya 'l-muqīm  
Law mittu 'shtu mā ashā'u fi 'l-madinati 'l-  
munīra. (p. 40)



#### 4.4

Law mittu ʿishtu mā ashāʿu fi ʿl-madīnati ʿl-  
munīra  
Madīnātu ʿl-ṣaḥwi ʿl-ladhī yazkharu bi ʿl-adwā  
Wa ʿl-shamsu lā tufāriqu ʿl-zahīra  
Awwāhu yā madīnati ʿl-munīra  
Hal ʿanti wahmu wāhimin taqatṭaʿat bihī ʿl-  
subul  
Am anti ḥaqq  
Am anti ḥaqq?. (p. 41)

#### 4.5

ʿaynāki ʿushshiya ʿl-akhīr  
Arqudu fīhimā, wa lā atīr  
... ..  
Wa ʿindamā ḥatṭa janāḥu qalbiya ʿl-naziq  
Baynahumā ʿaraftu annanī adrakt  
Nihāyata ʿl-masīr  
  
al-Ḥubbu, yā ḥabībatī firdawsinā ʿl-ʿamīn  
... ..  
Ḥīna taʿūwdu zahrūnā ʿl-ʿayyām  
Wa tantahī riḥlatunā li shāṭiʿi ʿl-manūn  
Nadhūbu fī hawāʾihī muhallilīna bāsimīn  
Ka annanā luḥūn. (p. 41)

#### 4.6

Fajʿatan...  
Lāḥat lahū biṣḥāratan bayḍāʿ  
Rāyatan min nūr  
Rāḥatan min nūr. (p. 42)



## 4.7

Wa miltu nahwa zillikī 'l-nadiyyi, yā ḥabībatī  
 Anshuqu rīḥa 'l-zahri fī ḥadā'iqik  
 Aballu qalbī bi 'l-nadā, an<sup>o</sup>ishuhū bi 'l-zilli  
 wa 'l-nasā'im  
 Yaghsilunī ḥanānuki 'l-raḡīqi mithlamā  
 Taghtasilu 'l-samā'u bi 'l-ghamā'im  
 Wa mithlamā tahtazzu li 'l-rabī'ei shajarah  
 Yasquṭu <sup>o</sup>cannī waraḡi 'l-qadīm  
 Yamūtu ḥuzniya 'l-<sup>o</sup>caḡīm  
 Yuṣāfiḥu 'l-ḥayāta wajhiya 'l-ladhī nadartihī  
 bi basmatik  
 Amuddu nahwa 'l-shamsi kafayya  
 Wa arfa<sup>o</sup>u 'l-<sup>o</sup>caynayni li 'l-nujūm. (p. 42)

## 4.8

al-shamsu arḡa<sup>o</sup>at <sup>o</sup>curūqanā ma<sup>o</sup>ā  
 -al-Fajru rawwānā nadan ma<sup>o</sup>ā  
 -Iṣṭabagh<sup>o</sup>nā khudratan muzdahirā  
 -Fī 'l-rabī'ei naktasī thiyābanā 'l-mulawwanā  
 -Fī 'l-kharīfī nakhla<sup>o</sup>u ththiyāba na<sup>o</sup>rā badanā  
 -Nastahimmu fī 'l-shitā'  
 -Ṣuffiyatā min 'l-rimāli wa 'l-mahār  
 -Tuwwijatā sabikatan mina 'l-nahāri wa 'l-zabad  
 -Tashrabunā ṣaḥābatun raḡīqa  
 -Nadhūbu tahta thaghri shamsin ḥulwatin rafīqa.



#### 4.9

Law annanā kunnā bi khaymatayni jārātayn  
 Nuḍī'u li 'l-ushshāqi waḥdahum wa li 'l-  
 musāfirin  
 Naḥwa diyāri 'l-ishqi wa 'l-maḥabba

Law annanā kunnā janāḥay nawrasin raqīqin  
 Wa nā'imīn...

Muḥalliqun alā dhu'ābati 'l-sufun

Yubashshiru 'l-mallāḥu bi 'l-wuṣūl

Wa yuwqizi 'l-ḥanīna li 'l-ahbābi wa 'l-waṭan

... ..

Yu 'ānisu 'l-baḥḥārati 'l-ladhīna urhiqū bi  
 ghurbati 'l-diyār

... ..

Bi 'l-shadwi wa 'l-ashār. (p. 45)

#### 4.10

Wa ḥīnama 'ltaqaynā yā ḥabībatī, ayqantu annanā  
 Muftariqān

Wa annanī sawfa azallu wāqifan bi lā makān

Law lam yu'idnī ḥubbuki 'l-raqīqi li 'l-ṭāḥāra

Fa na'rifā 'l-ḥubba ka ghuṣṣay shajara

Ka najmatayni jārātayn

Ka mawjatayni taw'amayn

Mithla janāḥay nawrasin raqīqin

inda 'idhin lā naftariq/ Yaḍummunā ma'an  
 ṭariq. (p. 49, 50)



## 5.1

(Ayyatuhā 'l-safīnatu 'l-wahmiyyatu 'l-isār  
 Ya wardatu 'l-ṣaḡīr  
 Ayyatuha 'l-ḥasīfatu 'l-muḥkamati 'l-isāri  
 Khalfa 'l-zamāni 'l-dawwār).  
 Ḥattā idhā ṭāla 'ntiḏāriya marīr  
 Sharibtu ka'si 'l-khamri wa 'l-duwār  
 Ka'annanī 'uqabbilu 'l-dumū'a qatratān fa qatra  
 Ka'annanī altadhdhu bi 'l-ya'si wa 'l-inkisār  
 Wa 'awraqa 'l-yaqīnu  
 Anna mustahīlan qāṭi'an ka 'l-sayfi  
 Liqā'unā  
 Illā li lamḥatin min ṭarafī.1

## 5.2

Lā tubḥir ʿaksa 'l-aqdār  
 Wa 'squt mukhtāran fi 'l-takrār.2

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Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *al-Aḥmālū 'l-Kāmila*, vol3, p. 461, 462.  
 Abdu 'l-Ṣabūr, *al-Ibḥāru fi 'l-Dhākira*, p. 74.



